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CASTE CONFLICT AND ELITE FORMATION

The Rise of a Karāva Elite in Sri Lanka, 1500–1931

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CASTE CONFLICT AND ELITE FORMATION

The Rise of a Karāva Elite in Sri Lanka 1500–1931

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE

LONDON NEW YORK NEW ROCHELLE

MELBOURNE SYDNEY

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521232104

First published 1982
This digitally printed version 2008

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-0-521-23210-4 hardback
ISBN 978-0-521-05285-6 paperback

dedicated with fondness
to Shona
Kim and Maya

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PREFACE

This book can be said to have its roots in a contretemps between university students and army personnel at Peradeniya Campus in February 1969: for this conflict provided an unexpected vacation which enabled me to write up a seminar paper on the rise of a Karāva elite which was then presented before the Ceylon Studies Seminar. Since then progressively modified versions of this paper have been presented at various times at the Center of Asian Studies at the University of Chicago, at Harvard University, at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London and at the Südasien Institut of the University of Heidelberg. I have profited from every one of these discussions. In the course of re-directing my research and expanding my findings into a book-length analysis, I have also been fortunate in receiving advice and assistance in various forms from numerous individuals. At the risk of courting charges of invidious distinction, I take this opportunity to acknowledge the assistance received from the late G. C. Mendis and the late Shanti Sri Chandrasekera and to thank Paul Alexander, Maren Bellwinkel, Barney Cohn, C. R. de Silva, K. N. O. Dharmadasa, Hans-Dieter Evers, Sena Jayasuriya, V. Kanapathypillai, Bruce Kapferer, Gananath Obeyesekere, Patrick Peebles, L. S. D. Pieris and Dietmar Rothermund for their encouragement and aid. In its final stages the anonymous referees of the Cambridge University Press helped me to bring this production into more readable shape. Despite this imposing list of support, and the equally imposing history of this publication, shortcomings must remain. I claim the right to be criticised for these.

This book embodies only a small part of the data collected in the course of my researches into the processes of elite formation

in British Ceylon – a venture which commenced in late 1968 and has continued to the present, interspersed, so to speak, with research work on the nationalist movement in Sri Lanka. The collection of data would not have been possible without the labour of numerous officers at the Department of National Archives in Sri Lanka, at the Public Record Office in London and at the libraries attached to the Südasien Institut, Heidelberg Universität and the Universities of Peradeniya, Chicago and Adelaide. The research work in 1969–70 and the early 1970s was assisted by several research grants from the University of Peradeniya. Throughout these initial stages I was encouraged by the hospitality and cooperation of numerous Sri Lankan families into whose family biographies I persistently delved. In 1975–6 I had the good fortune to win a fellowship from the Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung; and this provided the opportunity and environment for me to begin this book during the latter half of 1976. My move to the Department of Anthropology at the University of Adelaide in 1977 capped, and underpinned, this preparation by providing me with an intellectual climate which assisted me enormously in refining the outlines of my analysis during the course of seminars and personal discussions. On looking back now, I feel that this unplanned 'trajectory' in my preparation could not have been better planned.

One must return to 'first things' at the last. The bulk of my labour was undertaken at Peradeniya University and was nourished by the spirit of scholarship and endeavour maintained by my gurus and peers at the Department of History. My long association with Peradeniya Campus is something which I shall always cherish.

Adelaide M.R.
December 1980

GLOSSARY

anagārika	literally meaning 'homeless'.
äṅgabaḍḍa	literally 'body tax', thus a general poll tax or capitation tax. It was levied in different forms from different castes and, therefore, came to refer to the amount of cinnamon each cinnamon peeler was supposed to deliver to the Dutch.
apirisidu	impure, polluted.
aumani (amani)	the system of collecting the revenue directly through government headmen.
avarna	low caste.
baas	foreman, carpenter; a Sinhalese word derived from the Dutch.
baḍḍa	a caste organised as a department for rendering service to the state. In other contexts, a rent or tax.
baṇa pota	a book of Buddhist scriptures (plural: *poṫ*).
bhikkhu	an ordained Buddhist monk.
bōdhisattva	a Buddha-to-be.
buḍu gē	a small shrine, usually within a house.
chekkhoes (chekkhus)	indigenous oil-pressing machines powered by animals, usually cattle, moving around in a circle.
chena	swidden agriculture or shifting cultivations; see *hēna*.
dāna	offering, giving; usually an alms-giving for monks.
dāyaka	literally means 'donor'; but refers to a lay

supporter or patron of a Buddhist monastery, its activities and its monks.

dāyaka sabha an association of temple patrons devoted to the welfare of each temple.

dēva, deiyō, deviyo a god (gods).

dēvālagam villages or paddy fields granted by the king to *dēvāla*.

dēvalaya (dēvala) a shrine dedicated to a god or gods of the Sinhalese Buddhist pantheon.

dhonies used generally as small coastal transport craft in the Indian Ocean.

dissāva governor of a province.

divel (i) a patron's services or gifts to subordinates; (ii) lifetime grants of land, pay or wages.

dubash literally 'interpreter'; used in India to refer to a native official working for a European company and hence extended to mean (i) a go-between; (ii) a ship's chandler.

durayā headman of a low caste.

ehemai yes, a term used by an inferior (e.g. of lower caste) to a superior.

fanam a coin used in southern India and Sri Lanka in Portuguese times and after.

gabaḍāgam villages or fields set aside for the maintenance of the state establishment.

gama (gam) a village or, in some contexts, a field (plural: *gam*).

gǟni woman, mistress, wife.

gattara degraded, usually referring to persons from the Goyigama caste who have been degraded in status by the king.

gē of; thus referring to one's identifying genealogical name and descent group.

gedara (i) house; (ii) family name, patriline or descent group.

gel kaneel the duty imposed on each cinnamon

	peeler to supply a certain quantity of cinnamon over and above that which he was expected to supply freely as his normal labour duty, for which quantity he was paid at a specified rate.
hāmi	lord, master; a male honorific.
hāmu	lord, master; an honorific term of address.
haṭana	battle, struggle.
havul rassāva	partnership work.
hēna	land subject to swidden agriculture; corrupted in English to 'chena'.
hēvāpanna	the term used to refer to the highest ranking section of the Salāgama caste in more recent times, apparently incorporating the *panividakārayō* and *hēvāyō*.
hēvāyō	(i) soldiers, or more properly, militiamen liable for *rājakāriya*; (ii) the second-ranking grade in the Salāgama caste.
hīna jäti	low caste.
hoňda	good.
jāḍi	pickled fish.
jajmāni	the dyadic relationship between patron and client, landlord and tenant, associated with face-to-face caste transactions in India.
Jātaka	story of a former life of the Buddha, whilst still a *bōdhisattva* or Buddha-to-be.
jätiya	(i) race; (ii) nation; (iii) caste; (iv) rank; (v) kindred.
kachcheri (cutcherry)	the headquarters of a district administration.
kachcheri mudaliyar	a principal headman serving at the *kachcheri* and acting as a general go-between for the Government Agent.
karawala	dried fish.
Kevul (Kevulā) (Kevaṭṭa)	name for the old Sinhalese fishing caste, subsequently used by others for the Karāva (see chap. 3).

kōlam	the genre of the masked folk-play in southern Sri Lanka.
kolombuva	a low stool or block of wood retained by people in their residences or huts for use by certain visitors of inferior status.
koṇḍē	describes long hair drawn up at the back in a knot or bun; a style that was common among Sinhalese cultivators in the past.
kōralē	a district.
kōralēmudaliyar	*mudaliyar* of a *kōralē.*
kurakkan	millet or *eleusine coracana.*
kuruňdukārayō	one of the intercaste gradations of the Salāgama caste.
kūruvē lēkam	a headman in the elephant department.
lascarins	native militiamen, eligible for military service under *rājakāriya.*
mādäla	the huge drag net employed for beach seine fishing in Sri Lanka (plural: *mādäl).*
maḍigē	the transport department in the Sinhalese kingdoms (in our context, the Kingdom of Kandy).
mahajana sabha	an association of people.
mahamudaliyar	the highest office in the Low-Country native department in British times; interpreter and translator to the governor (largely ceremonial after 1833).
mandrādi	the steersman and chief fisherman in a beach seine fishing crew, usually an older and more experienced hand.
maniagar	a Tamil revenue officer.
Marakkala	Moors.
marakkalai	same as a *mandrādi*, with the latter term being favoured north of Colombo and *marakkalai* being commonly used further south.
menēri	Italian millet.
mudalāli	a Sinhalese merchant or businessman; a

term used to cover a wide range of entrepreneurs.

mudali an aristocratic segment of the Goyigama caste, the *mudiyansē* class of people or *mudiyanselā*.

mudaliyar (i) a chief headman; until the eighteenth century a civil and military officer; and an administrator of a *kōralē* in British times; (ii) also used as a honorary title from the mid-nineteenth century.

muhandiram (i) assistant to a *mudaliyar*; (ii) an honorary title.

mung äṭa green gram.

mutts the Kannada word for the seat of a spiritual authority or guru.

nǟpirisa kindred who constitute one's following, or host of supporters.

naraka bad.

nǟyo relatives, kinfolk.

nikāya (i) in a textual sense, one of the five subdivisions of the *sutta piṭaka*, which is one section of the Buddhist canon; (ii) as used in this book, the monastic fraternity (sometimes referred to as a 'sect').

nindagam villages or fields granted by the state to noblemen.

ohori the plural form of *ohoriya*, the part of a woman's cloth that is thrown over the shoulder; but also referring to the Kandyan sāri.

oruva outrigger canoe, a typical Sinhalese craft.

pāḍuva a loss, a shortcoming.

pahat jāti low caste.

panchayat village or caste council of elders, used as a judicial tribunal.

panividakārayō the highest ranking intercaste gradation among the Salāgama in pre-British and early British times.

pansala the building in which monks reside; in a general sense a synonym for a *vihāraya*.

pāruva a special canoe with a prow in the shape of a miniature landing-craft, which is used for beach seine work.

patabändi literally 'tied straps', but referring to honorific titles that were ceremonially conferred by kings.

paṭṭi shepherds, a relatively inferior segment of the Goyigama caste.

paṭṭu a sub-district within a *kōralē*.

pavula (i) family; (ii) kindred; (iii) wife.

peläntiya kin-based status groups constituted on the foundations provided by traditional pre-capitalist Sinhalese ideology.

perahära a procession; usually, a religious procession.

pēruva (i) class, category; (ii) department.

pin merit, moral good.

pingo a porterage contraption involving a wooden bar, which could rest on the shoulders, and two baskets hanging one from each end.

pirisa host or following; the number of persons a lord could muster; synonymous with *sēnāva*.

pirisiḍu pure.

pirivara retinue.

piriveṇa a monastic school or college.

radala the highest sub-caste of the Goyigama. Nowadays, used also as a Sinhalese translation for the English term 'aristocrat'.

radalakampēruva the aristocracy or ruling class.

rājakāriya primarily and literally, service to the king; and not dissimilar to corvée labour. Also extended to cover services to a nobleman, a *vihāra* or *dēvala* by tenants occupying their service lands.

raṭa	country or region.
raṭēmahatmaya	a governor of a province or chief headman in the Kandyan Kingdom and the Kandyan provinces of British times.
rēndarāla (rēndakārayā) (rendamahaitaya)	a renter of franchises auctioned or leased out by the government.
sāmaṇēra	Buddhist noviciate.
SamaSamājist	socialist, in the sense in which it is used in the party label of the Lanka Sama Samāja Party.
Sangha (Saṃgha)	Order of Buddhist monks.
Sāsana	(i) Buddhist teachings, instructions and practices; (ii) more commonly, the Buddhist dispensation.
sīmā	the consecrated boundary within which the higher ordination and other ecclesiastical acts are performed.
sīṭṭuva	(i) revolving credit association; (ii) promissory note; (iii) legal decree, usually written on a palm leaf.
tamusē	you, second person pronoun, usually used among equals as distinct from *tō, um̆ba* which refer to those of subordinate status.
taravad	the matrilineal joint family corporation among the Nayars of Kerala and Tanjore.
terunnānse	a senior monk.
theppaṇ (theppam)	catamaran, a word of Tamil origin.
ṭovil	menial services.
ṭovilē	(i) services rendered by a menial to a patron; (ii) an exorcist healing ritual (the common usage today but not used in this sense in this book).
ṭombo	registers of lands, schools or population compiled under the Portuguese or Dutch administrations.
ṭunhavul	literally 'three parts'; referring here to

	land grants in the eighteenth-century Maritime Provinces which gave freehold rights to the grantees, provided that they devoted one-third of the area to cinnamon cultivation and delivered the crop to the Dutch government.
ūliyakkārayō	the lowest ranking intercaste gradation within the Salāgama caste.
um̆ba	you; generally implying that the person addressed is of inferior status to the speaker and often carrying derogatory connotations.
unnānse	'his reverence', a respectful term used to refer to a monk.
upasampadā	higher ordination by which a *sāmaṇēra* (or novice) is admitted to the Buddhist *Sangha* as a *bhikkhu* (monk).
väḍa karana minissu	literally 'working people'; that is, people from the service castes or, usually, non-Goyigama folk.
vaḍuga	immigrant northern (Telugu) warriors.
vallam (ballam)	a Tamil word for an inshore fishing craft similar to the *pāruva*.
vamsa	(i) lineage; (ii) caste; (iii) kind.
variga	(i) kind; (ii) an affinal, endogamous kin group, or sub-caste.
varṇa	(i) colour; (ii) ancient fourfold division of Hindu society.
vāsagama	family name, patrilineal name; literally 'dwelling village'.
vāsala	entrance to the palace, translated 'Gate' in titles.
vāsala mudaliyars	high honorary rank in Dutch Ceylon and British Ceylon.
ṿedarāla	ayurvedic physician, indigenous medical practitioner.
ṿidāna	a village-level revenue officer and headman, whose duties sometimes included keeping the peace.

vihāraya (vihāra) building in a Buddhist temple compound which contains one or more religious artifacts.

wāḍiya a migrant camp or the dormitory of male workers – usually in reference to fishermen but also used in relation to the camps of cinnamon peelers and graphite mine workers.

walauwa (valavva) the residence or residential complex of a Sinhalese noble.

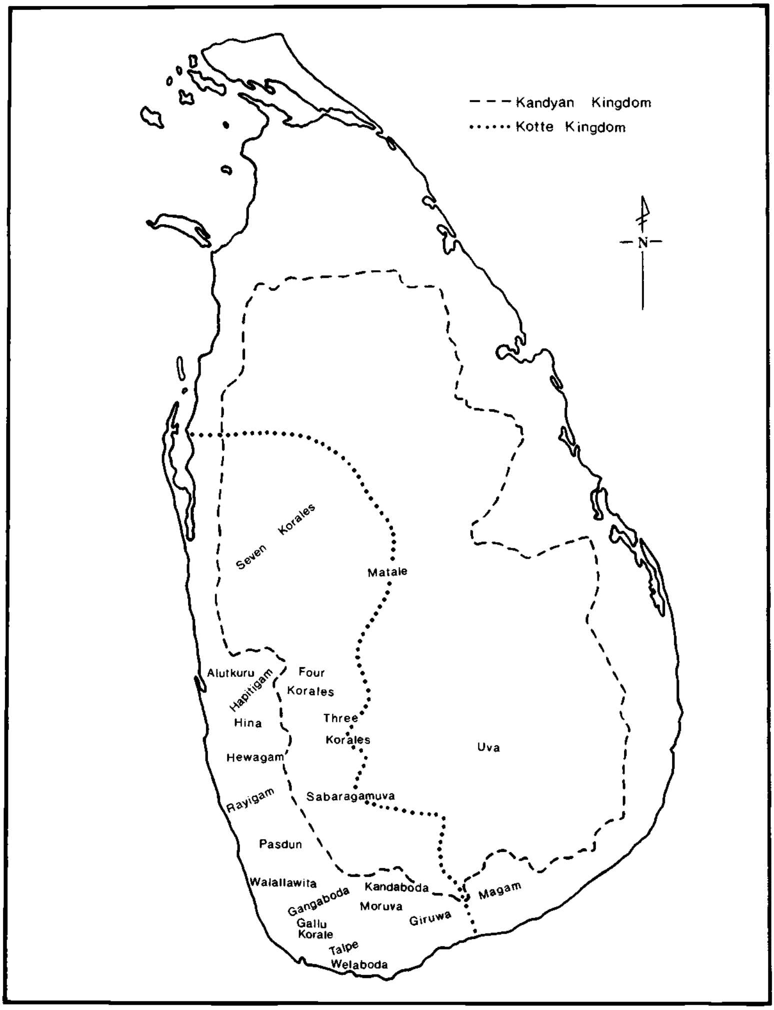
yāthra dhoni (oruva) a fair-weather coastal junk, with an outrigger, that 'ran to 50 tons' burden' (James Hornell).

yevudor the drag net used for beach seining in Ghana; a word derived from the Portuguese.

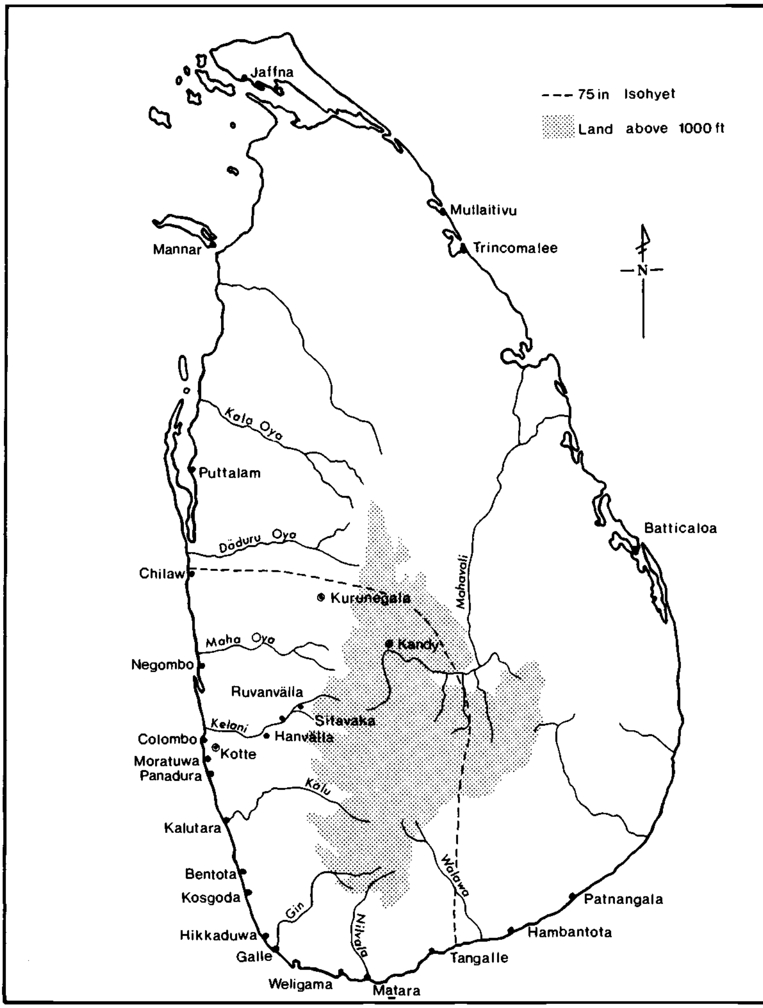
ABBREVIATIONS

AR	*Administration Reports* (with year of reports following)
CDN	*Ceylon Daily News*
CJHSS	*The Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Studies*
CML	*Ceylon Morning Leader*
CO	Colonial Office
DNA Lanka	Department of National Archives, Sri Lanka
JRAS BB/CB/GB and I	*The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Bengal Branch/Ceylon Branch/Great Britain and Ireland
Karāva Petition, 1830	'The Humble Petition of the undersigned inhabitants of the Fisher Caste, of different stations, viz. Tangalle, Matura, Weligame, Galle, Pantura, Alootcoor Corle, and Negombo', addressed to W. M. G. Coelbrooke [*sic*], 10 November 1830, in CO 54/131, fols. 472–5
MCS	*Modern Ceylon Studies*
Moratuwa Petition, 1829	'Petition from 112 Inhabitants of Moratuwa', n.d. [4 August 1829?] in CO 416/32/fols. 501–6 (notes supplied by Dr Patrick Peebles)
Papers CHC	*Papers Relating to the Constitutional History of Ceylon*, Colombo: Govt Printer
PRO	Public Record Office
RCS in 1818	Reports on Castes and Services, enclosures 8 and 9 in Brownrigg to Bathurst,

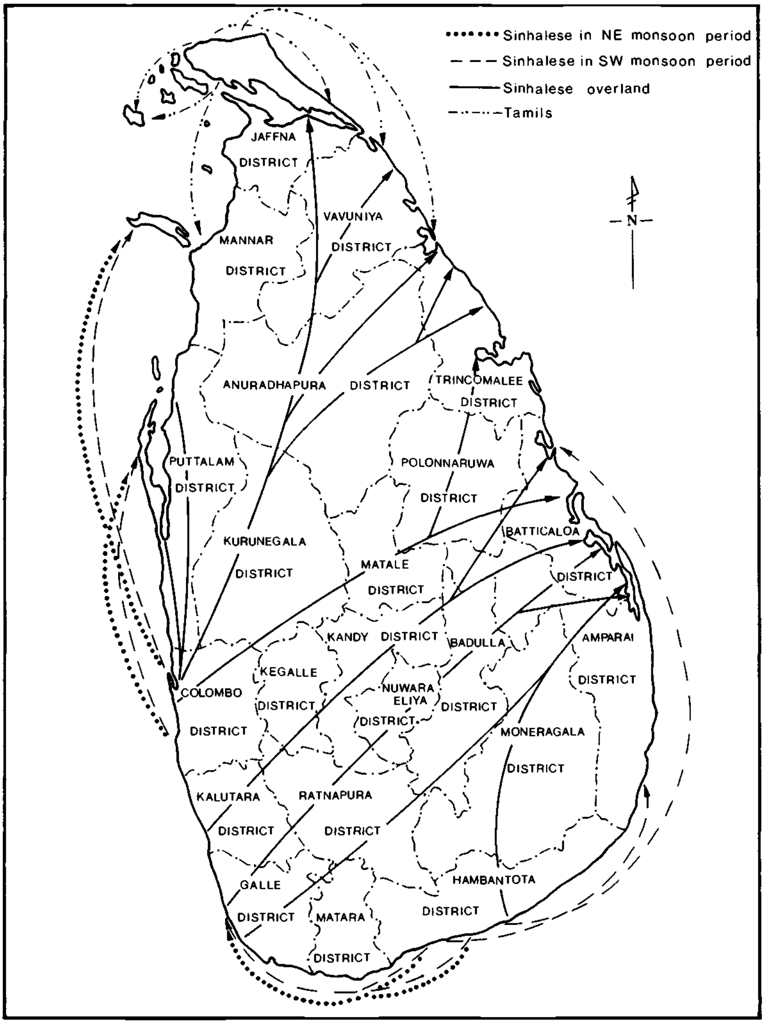
	no. 290, 17 July 1818, in CO 54/71, fols. 61–104
ROHP	Roberts Oral History Project: this was undertaken between late 1965 and 1967 and involved interviews with retired British and Ceylonese administrators, as well as senior politicians, with the intention of producing channelled reminiscences. A small number of the recorded interviews and correspondence is available in typescript form at the Library, University of Peradeniya, and at Rhodes House Library, Oxford
T. Cent. Imp.	*Twentieth Century Impressions of Ceylon*, comp. by Arnold Wright, London: 1907
UCHC	University of Ceylon: *History of Ceylon, Volume Three*, ed. by K. M. de Silva, Colombo: Apothecaries Co., 1973



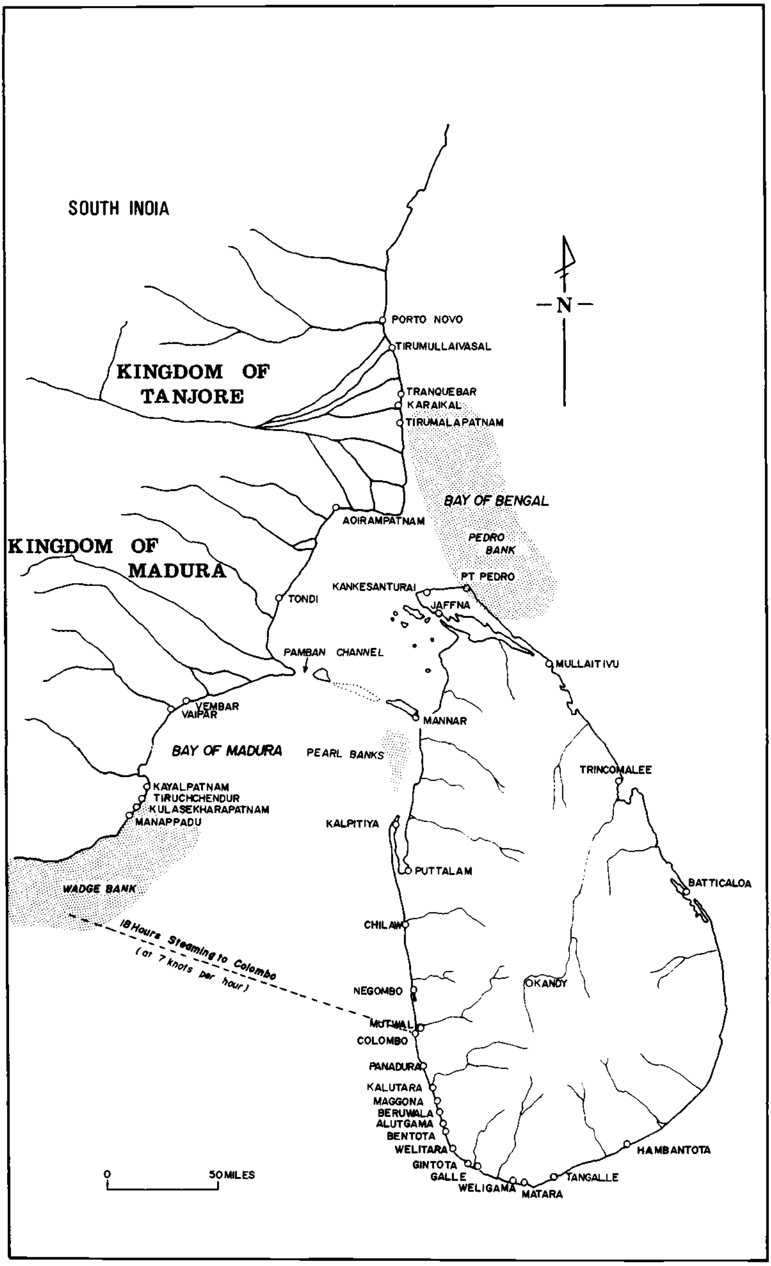
1 The Kingdoms of Kotte and Kandy. Derived from C. R. de Silva, *The Portuguese in Ceylon 1617–1638*, Colombo: H. W. Cave & Co., 1972 and V. Kanapathypillai, Dutch Rule in Maritime Ceylon, 1766–1796, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, London University, 1969



2 Some physical features and place names



3 Present administrative divisions and the contemporary migration patterns of fishermen. Migration patterns derived from Fritz Bartz, 'Fischer auf Ceylon', *Bonner Geographische Abhandlungen – Heft 27*, 1959 and *Die Grossen Fischereiräume der Welt*, 1964–5



4 The coastal waters of Sri Lanka and southeastern India. Derived from S. Arasaratnam, 'The politics of commerce in the coastal kingdoms of Tamil Nad, 1650–1700', *South Asia*, no. 1, 1971b

I

Introduction

This book describes and analyses the emergence of an elite of capitalists and Western-educated men and women among the Karāva people in Sri Lanka during the colonial era. It seeks to explain how the Karāva caste produced a significant proportion of the Sinhalese elite and the Sinhalese capitalist class in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Many of these Karāva families rose from relative obscurity. In pre-British times only a handful of Karāva *mudaliyars*, or chief headmen, possessed a significant degree of status and power. The principal indigenous landholders and officials in the Kotte Kingdom as well as the Portuguese and Dutch colonial states had been drawn from the aristocratic ranks of the Goyigama caste – a caste which not only commanded the highest ritual status among the Sinhalese, but also enjoyed a numerical superiority and a monopoly of access to the highly influential Buddhist monastic Order, the Sangha.

In common with such castes as the Salāgama and Durāva, the Karāva possessed the mixed disadvantage of being mostly made up of relatively recent Dravidian migrants. Their position contrasted with that of other non-Goyigama castes whose specialist functions involved ritual services to the Goyigama caste people or to the local temple. In further contrast, it would appear that, initially, they did not control much wet paddy land and were not involved in rice cultivation to the same degree as either the Goyigama or the other non-Goyigama castes. Nevertheless, they were slotted into the structure of caste-regulated corvée services known as *rājakāriya* (king's service) and came to be regarded as Sinhalese castes. Since the principal occupations which they were constrained to take up were assessed in the light of pollution concepts and Buddhist

values, they found that they were saddled with a distinctly subordinate and low caste status, especially in relation to the Goyigama. This structural situation provided both the incentive and the leeway for some Karāva, Salāgama and Durāva families to make use of new economic and political opportunities to improve their circumstances. In this sense their elites were produced out of, and involved in, the dialectics of caste competition, both with each other and with the Goyigama. But in challenging the Goyigama and resisting the disabilities which had been applied against them, they tended to adopt the status symbols and the idiom favoured by the Goyigama aristocracy. Their very challenges, therefore, encouraged their further integration into the heterogeneous body of Sinhalese culture.

Though much of the detail embodied in this book is fashioned out of individual case histories, the argument outlined above emphasises the group situation of the Karāva. The focus is not solely upon achievement-oriented individuals and families. The incentives and the opportunities for socio-economic advance and the strategies of upward social mobility utilised by individuals were influenced both by the structure of caste interaction among the Sinhalese as well as economic and political developments. In spelling this argument out in a variety of ways, this book suggests that the emerging Karāva elite could not easily forget their Karāva-ness. It is for this reason that their material advances were eventually directed towards status-raising strategies and political goals. For this reason, too, any analysis of the Karāva elite's emergence must explore the position of the Karāva people as a whole in pre-British times, even though the historical information that is available for this period is limited.

The scanty information relating to the migration of those people who came to be described as the Karāva is assembled in chapter two. They appear to have trickled in over a period of time extending from the thirteenth to the eighteenth centuries. Till the eighteenth century, they were only found within the coastal districts in the south and west of the island; and, within these districts, they were concentrated in the strip of land bordering the sea. The Durāva and Salāgama were also con-

fined to these coastal districts till the eighteenth century[1] and for this reason these three castes are widely referred to as 'the Low-Country Sinhalese castes', that is, in contradistinction from those castes that are found in both the Low-Country and Kandyan Sinhalese districts. This distinctiveness became all the more pronounced as these three communities succeeded in producing a number of successful entrepreneurs and English-educated men and women in British times. In bracketing these three castes together such a phrase provides a convenient short-hand. Such a shorthand is often necessary. In this study the symbols KSD will be employed as a convenient means of embracing all three castes. This should not be interpreted to mean that the Karāva, Salāgama and Durāva acted in concert or replicated each others' successes and attributes in every way. On the contrary, they often came into sharp conflict and in certain localities the enmities between these castes were virtually endemic.

It will be evident from this sketch that the Karāva migrants entered upon a two-way process of acculturation and integration into local society. Along the southwestern coast this meant an adoption of Sinhala Buddhist culture. It was a road which the Karāva appear to have taken in a hesitant manner. In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries large numbers converted to Catholicism. Had Portuguese rule continued it is likely that this fissiparous, less-acculturative route would have led the Karāva to a position that was broadly analogous to that of the Maronite Christians in the Lebanon or the Armenians in Asia Minor. However, following the overthrow of the Portuguese by the Dutch in the 1650s, this fissiparous tendency was partially arrested. Many Karāva reverted to Buddhism, especially in the southern districts. As the Sinhala language gained ascendancy, many indigenous cultural practices (e.g. healing rituals) were widely adopted. Even the significant minority of Karāva Catholics were not immune to this process of indigenisation.

[1] Some Karāva and Salāgama people are known to have resided in the Kandyan districts by the eighteenth century, and in British times this number increased. While, therefore, it can no longer be said that they are confined to the Low-Country, their population concentrations still are centred therein. According to Ryan (1953, p. 94), the Hinnā and Demala Gattara castes are also 'Low-Country castes'.

Since the structure of caste interaction in Sinhalese society is central to the analysis presented in this book, chapter three devotes considerable attention to a description of the morphology of Sinhalese caste. This description is set against the background of caste in the Indian sub-continent and a brief description of caste ideology. Inevitably, such a description underlines the differences between caste in India and caste among the Sinhalese. Most of these differences are too well known to justify their repetition in this introductory chapter. But it is pertinent to recall Louis Dumont's suggestion that Sinhalese caste was a 'quasi-caste' export from India, a conclusion reached on the ground that the Sinhalese state was 'markedly bureaucratic' in nature and because there was 'an extremely fully worked out "liturgy" centred upon the king', so that the Sinhalese monarch was central to both the 'group religion' and to 'political and economic life'.[2]

Scholars are agreed in the view that the Sinhalese state regulated the caste system and upheld caste principles.[3] It served as a font of legitimation and its resources entered into the calculations of ambitious individuals and social groups. In these circumstances an understanding of Sinhalese kingship ideology is pertinent to the analysis of the interrelations between individuals, castes and the state, and to the socio-political symbolism which was an important part of these interrelations.

The Sinhalese state was influenced by Asian conceptions of kingship. These ideas centred upon the notion of a *dēvarāja* (god–king), or *dhammarāja* (righteous ruler) or a syncretist combination of the two. In the Buddhist polities these ideas were heavily influenced by the Buddhist teachings and *Jātaka* stories. What is striking about this corpus of religious literature is the centrality of the *dhammarāja* or *cakkavatti* for the pursuit and prevalence of the Dhamma or Buddhist doctrine. Having achieved transcendance (*nibbāna*), Buddha was not available as an intercessionary power within this world. The Buddhist scheme therefore 'raised up the magnificent *cakkavatti* world ruler as the sovereign regulator and the ground of society'. The Buddhist teachings also used rich imagery to depict the force of

[2] 1972, pp. 262–3.
[3] Ralph Pieris, 1956, p. 180; and Malalgoda, 1976, p. 46.

morality and the weight of royal power. As Tambiah notes, 'the rhetoric of kingship reached a high point in the early Buddhist kingdoms'.[4]

The most notable of these kingdoms was that of Asoka Maurya. He bequeathed to southern Asia a model of kingship that has filtered down the ages into the political conceptions of the dynasties and the literati in many lands. Though the Asokan Empire was probably confederative or multi-centred in form, Asoka made 'a total claim for the role of kingship' and portrayed principles of political absolutism and wide-scale regulation with Orwellian connotations.[5] As both Tambiah and Romila Thapar suggest, outgoing Asokan Buddhism was not only a pacification policy, it was an ideological cement and a validation of the monarchical state. It was centripetalising in intent.[6]

Similar centripetal tendencies were generated by the emergence of relic worship among the Buddhists. Though Buddha's teachings contain a strong devaluation of rites, already in Asoka's time there flourished the cult of the *stupas*, the veneration of shrines containing the relics of the Buddha and great men. It is important in this regard to remember that in a wide range of countries religious shrines became sacred enclaves containing the palladiums of the groups residing in their environs. In this and other ways, as Paul Wheatley illustrates, the ceremonial centre had a 'centripetalizing function'.[7]

These traditions and tendencies entered Sri Lanka. By the late Anuradhapura Period (fourth century A.D. to eleventh century) the Sinhalese king was not simply the greatest among the barons. His position was pivotal. He was widely regarded as a source of prosperity and disaster. He was a divine being comparable to Siva and Vishnu in their might and glory. He was a god charged with the protection of the island and the Buddha *Sāsana*. He came, increasingly, to be viewed as a *bōdhisattva*, or incipient Buddha; and by the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the title of *cakkavatti* had also come into vogue. In consequence, the Sinhalese king was surrounded by sanctity,

[4] 1976, chaps. 4 and 5; quotations, p. 52. Also see Reynolds, 1972; Sarkisyanz, 1965; and Bechert, 1973.

[5] Tambiah, 1976, pp. 69–71.

[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 60–3; and Thapar, 1961, pp. 144–5.

[7] 1971, pp. 257–330 esp. pp. 257, 304–5, 311.

hedged around by taboos and glorified by court ceremonies. The 'commands emanating from him demanded implicit obedience as the expression of the will of the gods'. Elaborate conventions emphasised his superordinate role and marked out the distance between king and subjects.[8]

The practical limitations on the power of the kings must be assessed in the light of this ideology. Though the organisation of land rights created a multi-centred society in which there was some devolution of power to the Buddhist monasteries and the Goyigama gentry, it remains debatable whether we can follow Leach and Gunawardana in describing the Sinhalese polity as a feudal order.[9] Individual and corporate land rights were conditioned by a working alliance between the king and the Sangha, and by the political overlordship of the king. Those aristocratic lords who ran his administration and governed his territories received legitimacy from their connection with the king. They did not bestow authority on the king.[10] And just as he could make or break individuals – in principle at least and sometimes in fact – the king could make or break castes: he could make people *gattara* (degraded).

From medieval times the omnicompetence of the Sinhalese king, as well as his pivotal and integrative roles, were exemplified in the annual politico-religious pageant known as the Äsala Festival, at which the tooth relic of the Buddha, the palladium of Sinhalese monarchs, was carried in procession (the Äsala Perahära) around the streets of Kandy. H. L. Seneviratne's detailed description of this series of events reveals the symbolism which graphically conveyed these messages. For instance, the festival is inaugurated by the *kap* ceremony where a *kapa* (or pole) is planted in the premises of each *dēvala*. The *kapa* has multivocal meanings and is associated with a centre, permanence, fertility and prosperity. At the four *dēvala*, a ritual functionary acting on behalf of the king circumambulates the *kapa* in a proper manner – thereby proclaiming symbolically the king's capture of the kingdom. Seneviratne also shows that

[8] Dewaraja, 1972, pp. 208–21. Cf. Hettiarachchy, 1972, chap. v and pp. 163–87.

[9] Leach, 1959; and R. A. L. H. Gunawardana, 1971.

[10] This is also stressed by Peebles (1973, pp. 27–32, esp. p. 29, but cf. p. 36), but solely in relation to the Low-Country districts under the Portuguese and Dutch.

the Perahära was 'a microcosmic representation of all the salient features of Kandyan society'. As such, it was 'a pre-eminent representation of the caste system' and 'a validation of the existing hierarchical order'. In its careful allocations of space, moreover, those sections representing the provinces were hemmed in and 'engulfed by the sections representative of the central government'. In short, 'the spectacle was undoubtedly one of overwhelmingly strong state power'.[11] In the Äsala Festival, therefore, one sees the ceremonial festival functioning in the centripetal manner highlighted by Paul Wheatley. Herein, too, one finds the embodiment of what Clifford Geertz has identified as 'the Doctrine of the Exemplary Center' and 'the Doctrine of the Theater State'.[12]

Against this background it is not surprising that the state has figured prominently in Sri Lankan history in the processes by which rewards and statuses were allocated, and social gains were legitimated. The colonial conquests did not alter this situation.[13] Indeed, in bending the *rājakāriya* system to their own purposes, the colonial powers emphasised the patronage power of the state and added value to the nodal administrative position held by indigenous intermediaries, the headmen.[14]

Nevertheless, as widely recognised in the historiography on Sri Lanka, the period of colonial rule witnessed institutional amendments and economic developments which began to transform the political economy of the island. The period of Portuguese rule in the Low-Country extending from the 1590s to the year 1658 was marked by warfare, political disorder and a decline of population. While it is probable that social relations in these districts were profoundly influenced by these circumstances, there is inadequate historical data to chart their effects. Rather in contrast, the Dutch and British periods of rule were characterised by relatively ordered administrations. In referring to a specific trade deficit resulting from a period of warfare with the French, in 1675 the Dutch Governor, Ryckloff Van Goens sen., observed: 'it can easily be seen what a

[11] Seneviratne, 1978, pp. 71–4, 89–114; quotations, pp. 110, 112, 114.

[12] 1968, pp. 26–9, 36–43. Also Geertz, 1963, p. 103.

[13] For interesting and early examples of attempts to secure state legitimation, in this instance with regard to the titular headship of new Buddhist *nikāyas* (monastic fraternities), see Malalgoda, 1976, pp. 147–8.

[14] Peebles, 1973, pp. 38–74.

mischievous and horrible thing war is, and what prejudice this Government has suffered thereby'[15] – a statement which captures the commercial objectives of the Dutch and gains in significance from the fact that Van Goens sen. was one of the more aggressive Dutch governors. But while they both emphasised order and organisation, the British forms of order differed from those of the Dutch and moved in a different direction, especially from the 1830s. Nor did caste norms impinge on their administration to the same degree as that of the Dutch. Indeed, they did away with many of the social and political disabilities that had prevailed previously.

These changes provided the opportunity for families from outside the Goyigama aristocracy to improve their economic and social position, whether in collaboration with the colonial power or through independent economic activity. The period of colonial rule also furthered the process of occupational diversification and specialisation which the K S D castes had entered upon from the time of their migration to the island. Chapter three assembles the available information on occupational diversification among the KSD castes and relates this to the structure of caste interaction in the Low-Country Sinhalese districts. It calls attention to Ralph Peiris' description of the way in which the Sinhalese kings channelled the early migrants into specific occupations as a process of secularisation because they were not bound to serve the Goyigama aristocracy, the local temple or the state in a ritual capacity. Chapter four elaborates further on this information by describing the trading patterns in Portuguese and Dutch times, and by providing evidence that the Karāva were engaged in a wide range of occupations. It also reveals that a number of Karāva were engaged in regular trading activity by the eighteenth century, though the principal traders were the Moors. In this way, the chapter indicates that the foundations for the emergence of a Karāva elite were laid in Portuguese and Dutch times, both in an experiential sense and in the sense that primary capital was created for investment in entrepreneurial ventures at a crucial point of time: the early nineteenth century.

Chapter five briefly catalogues the changes that occurred in

[15] *Memoirs of Rycklofff Van Goens, 1663–1675*, 1932, p. 31.

the island's economic framework in the early nineteenth century, before proceeding to describe the growth of a Karāva elite in the period of British rule by providing illustrative case material as well as statistical detail. Not only did a number of Karāva families achieve considerable upward social mobility, but some of them accumulated enormous wealth. Such developments took place in the wake of an expansion in the capitalist mode of production within a context which permitted pre-capitalist forms of production and interaction to persist. The expansion of capitalism in its turn was symbiotically associated with the modification of the pre-British administrative structures, a modification which entailed the withdrawal of state interference in certain areas, and an extension of state agencies in other fields. Perhaps the most significant instrument of capitalist expansion was that of the plantation. Plantation ownership was not confined to Europeans. Indigenous residents took to cash crop cultivation (especially coconut) on plantations from an early date.[16] Indeed, the presence of numerous indigenous-owned cash crop plantations is one of the ways in which Sri Lankan history diverged from that in British India. It also meant that the emergence of the Western educated *in significant numbers* among the Sinhalese, Moor and Tamil communities (but not among the Burghers) was facilitated and even preceded by the emergence of a capitalist class of plantation owners and merchants.

For Sri Lanka as a whole, therefore, it is possible to refer to the growth of a capitalist class in British times. But any unity that was fostered by the mode of production was severely qualified by the colonial context and by numerous social cleavages. The capitalist class was split by the colour line and the racial prejudices among the British. The dominant segment always were the British merchants and planters. The coloured capitalists in their turn were divided into those with indigenous roots and those Asian migrants of recent arrival who maintained their distinctiveness (e.g. the Chetties, Borahs, Parsees and Sindhis). The indigenous capitalists also had loyalties to their respective communities: Sinhalese, Moor, Tamil and Burgher. And, as this book will illustrate, the Sinhalese

[16] See Roberts, in *UCHC*, 1973, pp. 103–6.

capitalists sometimes came into conflict with each other in their capacity as spokesmen or leaders of their respective castes. Not even in the early twentieth century was there a sufficiently active, cohesive and class-conscious proletariat to bring the capitalist class together and to enforce its unity in political action.[17] In such a context, therefore, the concept of an 'elite'[18] is regarded as a more serviceable tool for the purposes of this study than the concept of 'class'.

As a result of their economic successes, the status and power of the Karāva elite at the end of the nineteenth century stood in contrast with their situation in late Dutch and early British times. In the early decades of the nineteenth century, the economic strength of the Karāva elite was highly localised and there was a mere handful of Karāva notables, none of whom matched the leading Low-Country Goyigama aristocratic families in their control of landed wealth.[19] Nor did they challenge the caste primacy of the Goyigama with the same gusto as they displayed in the attacks they mounted in the late nineteenth century. Insofar as there was caste conflict at this stage, early British observers singled out the Salāgama, that is the Salāgama elite of that day, as the most assertive of the 'lower castes' and the most inclined to challenge the Goyigama.[20] What one sees in the nineteenth century, therefore, is a process whereby the Karāva elite outpaced the Salāgama elite, whereby they extended and generalised their economic, political and social influence and whereby they gathered sufficient strength to contest the validity of the prevailing caste hierarchy in a persistent fashion, while reaching out at the same time for the most prestigious and powerful positions in the system of governance that were open to indigenous entry (chapter six).

These challenges were induced by a dilemma in which the Karāva elite found themselves after achieving positions of affluence: a situation of status inconsistency, that familiar, yet significant, historical moment when one's social status is not

[17] See Roberts, 1974c and 1974d.

[18] A convenient summary of the literature on this subject can be found in Geraint Parry, 1969. Also see Bottomore, 1970; and C. Wright Mills, 1956. For a definition tailored for Sri Lanka, see Roberts, 1974a.

[19] Peebles, 1973, pp. 93–117. Also see below, pp. 47, 84.

[20] See below, pp. 90–1.

commensurate with one's wealth or political weight. In trying to overcome this situation and in assailing the claims to social superiority maintained by the Goyigama aristocracy (i.e., the 'first class Goyigama' in the Low-Country and the *radala* Goyigama in the Kandyan districts), the Karāva elite found at hand new symbols of status. These arose out of the process of 'Westernisation'. Part of this process was the acquisition of an English education, which could serve both as a symbol of status as well as an avenue of mobility. Among the first to acquire an English education were the aristocratic Goyigama families from the *mudaliyar* 'class' of late Dutch times, the 'first class Goyigama' as they were known. These families already enjoyed elite status. As Peebles has revealed, they used the new English education as a buttressing wall and a means of distancing themselves from their 'inferiors'.[21] But they could not monopolise English education. With the expansion of educational facilities, the 'second and third class Goyigama' and the non-Goyigama were able to use these facilities and entry into prestigious occupations as a channel of upward social mobility. Prominent among these non-Goyigama were several individuals and families from the Karāva, Salāgama and Durāva castes.

While the growth of capitalism may have altered the rules and the parameters of the status game, the older Sinhala values remained resilient and relevant. Neither the KSD caste elites nor the surviving Goyigama aristocrats were ready to throw them overboard in their entirety. If the new wealth was used to acquire secondary or tertiary education in the English medium, or to purchase prestigious Western trappings, it was also employed to send their *sāmaṇēras* (noviciates) to Burma to receive higher ordination (*upasampadā*) and become *bhikkhus*, or to disseminate printed literature which proclaimed their superior caste status. Caste symbolism remained vibrant and influential. It was in this mixed vein, therefore, with a cultural armoury that was drawn from Sinhalese and European heritages and that included conflicting principles of action, that the social struggles occurred in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In recounting some of the fascinating incidents

[21] 1973, pp. 7–8, 287–97, Cf. Srinivas, 1967, pp. 46–117 esp. p. 91.

which took place in the course of this social competition (chapter six), this book seeks to capture the period flavour of the middle–late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. One needs to immerse oneself in something like John Galsworthy's *The Forsyte Saga* in order to grasp the mood and tempo of elite social action in this period.[22] This might seem a surprising comparison, given the contrasting cultural contexts. That it can be made, *mutatis mutandis*, is not merely a testimony to the force of European influence in Sri Lanka; it suggests something about the structural similarities in political and social competition between families caught up in the processes of social mobility within a capitalist framework.

The struggles and incidents that are recounted in chapter six are also reminiscent of the activities of ambitious and upwardly mobile castes in India. They bear comparison with the agitations of caste associations in British India during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and those strategies of social mobility and legitimation of new-found power that have been described as 'Sanskritisation'.[23] This comparison is pursued in chapter seven. Because the Indian sub-continent is so extensive and varied, attention is largely focused upon southern India. Case-studies of attempted social mobility by two 'castes' that were traditionally accorded a low status in the regional caste hierarchy, the Iravas (Izhavas) of Travancore and the Shanars (Nadars) of southern Tinnevelly and Ramnad districts, are recounted briefly as a point of entry to a general survey of the literature on caste mobility. This survey concludes with a critical review of David Washbrook's writings on the subject of caste associations. It argues the need to give weight to the cultural order and the implicit values that mediate social interaction and permeate caste identities; and opposes interpretations which rely overwhelmingly on materialist conceptions of the structural order.

In the light of this survey of caste mobility in India, the latter part of chapter seven examines the degree to which a Karāva caste identity could be said to have existed prior to the articulation of caste claims by its elites during the British period. The institutionalisation of caste by the Sinhalese and colonial

[22] London: William Heinemann, 1956.

[23] Srinivas, 1962 and 1967. For elaboration, see below pp. 27–8, 221–4.

states, the organising concepts of the colonial administrations, the structure of caste discrimination in pre-British times, a long history of caste conflict within the localities in the coastal provinces and the cultural typifications that were part of regular social intercourse, all these, it is suggested, sustained a collective consciousness among the Karāva; and, for that matter, among the generality of Sinhalese castes. In contrast with the situation in southern India, there were no territorially separated endogamous sub-castes among the Karāva. Unlike the Goyigama, the Karāva do not appear to have even had clearly distinguishable sub-castes. As with other Sinhalese castes, Karāva caste endogamy was maintained without the aid of local caste councils or *panchayats*; and was effected through marriage practices which favoured alliance with kin and were centripetal in their influence.[24] Once communications improved, or where convenient forms of communication were in existence, there was little to restrict marriage alliances to one's own locality. From the nineteenth century, therefore, widely dispersed kin networks, the bilateral inheritance system and the central role of dowagers in Sinhalese families, and the instrumental advantages to Karāva merchants, lawyers and their like in maintaining such connections promoted networks that linked the notables of one locality to those in other localities.

In their turn, within each locality, Karāva notables maintained their linkages with the Karāva poor through patron–client transactions and political leadership, as well as through religious and philanthropic modes of legitimation. While, therefore, the growth of a Karāva elite widened the gap between the Karāva rich and the Karāva poor, there is little evidence of such internal differentiation bubbling to the surface in overt conflict. Nor did the rich Karāva abjure their caste origins. They saw themselves as community leaders and sought to raise the status of the caste as a whole. It was in their self-interest to do so.

In a context in which Karāva personnel were found in a wide range of occupations, such patterns of cohesion supported the retention of economic benefits within the boundaries of the

[24] I follow Yalman (1961) here. See below, pp. 38–9 for further elaboration.

caste and encouraged a cumulative process of 'economic spiralism': that is, the emergence of a successful Karāva plantation magnate or merchant prince tended to promote the advance of yet more Karāva entrepreneurs as the managers employed by the pathfinder branched off on their own, or as sub-contracts were farmed out to Karāva businessmen with their own fields of specialisation (chapter five). This process in its turn reinforced the cohesiveness of the Karāva caste on the 're-distributive' and inegalitarian lines that have been clarified by Karl Polanyi.[25]

The economic activities of the Karāva elite that are described in chapters four and five, and the social and political activities that are recounted in chapters six and seven, provide us with the background and several of the clues for what must be viewed as the major concern of this book: an explanation of the factors responsible for the emergence of a significant number of Karāva elite families in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This explanation is presented in chapters eight and nine. Chapter eight seeks to achieve this explanation through a series of controlled comparisons between a contracting series of social categories: the Low-Country Sinhalese are compared with the other Sinhalese, that is, those in the Kandyan districts; the K S D are compared with other Low-Country Sinhalese; the Karāva are compared with the Salāgama and Durāva; and the noticeably successful Moratuwa Karāva[26] are compared with the other Karāva. Chapter nine then trims this exploratory analysis and intuitively seeks to delineate the principal factors in broad historical sequence.

In sum, chapters eight and nine point to a number of interlinked factors as underpinning and furthering the emergence of a Karāva elite. The argument is complex and, at this stage of the book, there will be shortcomings in any attempt to codify it into a few sentences. Suffice it to be said that attention is not only called to the location of the Karāva in coastal districts which were subject to greater commercialisation and Westernisation than the deep interior, but also to their location on the waterfront with ready access to the waterborne carrying trade;

[25] 1968, pp. 149ff; and 1944, 47–53, 56. See below p. 130.

[26] Moratuwa is presently a town 12 miles south of Colombo. In Dutch times it was a collection of little villages and hamlets.

that emphasis is attached to their possession of fishing boats and wood-working skills, both of which could serve as a point of departure into other ventures; that a great amount of detail is entered into with regard to the occupational culture of fishing in order to support the argument that fishing provided the Karāva with experience in adventurous forms of enterprise and quasi-capitalist forms of organisation, besides providing a pool of boat owners, beach seine net owners and fish traders (*mudalalis*) who were in a position to transfer their capital and skills to other fields when the opportunities arose; that the pronounced degree of occupational diversification among the Karāva is said to have promoted cumulative gains and spawned new elite families; and it is argued that both occupational diversification and entrepreneurial venturesomeness were promoted by the low status and structural position of the Karāva caste in pre-colonial *and* pre-British times.

Particular emphasis is attached to the latter point. Together with the Salāgama and Durāva, the newly migrant Karāva found themselves in a social position with all the attributes of what Bruce Kapferer has called 'structural marginality'. This concept describes a section of the population, an activity or an institution that 'is routinely and systematically exposed to contradictory processes', and which is apart from, but still part of, 'other activities or institutions to which it relates, or which have produced it'. As with liminal periods in rituals, populations located in a structurally marginal situation have the capacity to generate new ways of behaving and to create 'new organizational and structural forms that override, or resolve, the fundamental contradictions that become manifest in the situation', though this capacity may not always crystallise.

> Thus one structural force might be clearly dominant over the other, inducing a subordinate but nonetheless opposed structure to adapt . . . to the dominant structure. This adaptive process might in itself be transformative, however, in that a series of dialectically related responses in a process itself results in the transformation of the entire social, political, or symbolic arrangement.[27]

Since Kapferer emphasises the potentially transformative capacity of a structurally marginal situation, in this study it has

[27] 1977 and 1978, pp. 290–1, 301–2.

been labelled 'wedge marginality' so as to distinguish it from those versions of marginality which imply peripheral social roles. With the KSD castes, their wedge marginality involved them in dialectical tension between a desire to merge and integrate with the other Sinhalese on the one hand, and a tendency to separate themselves and maintain an autonomous status on the other. By the late eighteenth century the integrative tendency could be said to have gained the upper hand. But the greater the acculturation and integration, the more noticeable was their subordinate social status and the more noticeable were the privileges enjoyed by the Goyigama. This encouraged the KSD elites to challenge the Goyigama in a variety of fields. But in challenging the Goyigama they were treating the latter as a point of reference, as a comparative reference group. In trying to out-manoeuvre the Goyigama, they tended to emulate the Goyigama aristocracy. And in forming their own legitimate lines of pupillary succession and establishing their monastic fraternities (*nikāyas*), the KSD Buddhists were pitchforked into Buddhist revitalisation activity in opposition to Christianity and the West. All these trends ultimately promoted their centripetal movement, their acculturation and integration into the variegated structure of Sinhalese society. This was an unintended consequence of profound significance.

These comments will indicate that this book is not merely a survey of the rise of a Karāva elite. This study, it is hoped, will illuminate broader processes and reach beyond the Karāva to their social field and the changes in this broader context. This strategy is not uncommon in social studies. An outstanding component in a movement is isolated and studied in detail so as to understand the broader movement of which it is part. In similar fashion it is believed that the achievements of the Karāva elite will provide *a* window to the Sinhalese world in metamorphosis.

In using this window as a point of entry and in distinguishing the factors responsible for the successes of the Karāva, the analytical approach has been eclectic, and sometimes even syncretic. However, in the final chapter this eclectic approach is diluted and the lines of analysis are sharpened so as to

emphasise those factors to which greater causal weight is attached on the basis of an essentially intuitive and qualitative assessment. Throughout, this analysis attempts to keep track of the large span of time which it is surveying and to delineate the periods in which various factors were operative.

The broad period which this study spans and the complexities of the subject demanded a survey that was confined to Sinhalese Sri Lanka. However, comparisons with other area studies have been touched upon occasionally in the course of this book and particular attention has been paid to the Indian sub-continent. Indeed, in relating the story of the Karāva elite one is struck by the comparisons that are evoked with the recent histories of the Ibo of Nigeria, the Minangkabau of Sumatra and the Southeast Asian Archipelago, the Parsees of Western India and the Marwaris of Northern India.[28] This raises the exciting possibility of a broad comparative study of entrepreneurial groups operating within the parameters of colonial capitalism and a dependent economy.

[28] See Ottenberg, 1959; Timberg, 1971a, 1971b and 1973; Eckehard Kulke, 1974; Guha, 1970a and 1970b; Swift, 1971; Josselin de Jong, 1952; and Tanner, 1974. Also see Geertz, 1963.

2
The Karāva in the past

Origins

According to Karāva spokesmen in recent times, the term 'Karāva' is derived from the Sanskrit term 'Kaurava' and the Karāva are of the same race of people as the Kauravar and Kurukulams of south India, the Kaorw of Rajputana and the Kurs of Bengal. They are descendants of the Kurus of the Mahabhārata and a warrior people of Kshātriya stock. Their royal lineage is said to be attested in the royal insignia in the flags and other emblems that have been used in their funeral and wedding ceremonies for several centuries, a practice sanctioned by the Sinhalese kings. The prevalence of the term 'suriya' in their clan names, other etymological and philological evidence and the honours they received from Sinhalese kings for military service are among the pieces of evidence presented in support of this hypothesis.[1] This folklore is supported by several 'sacred texts': the *Mukkara Haṭana*, Edgar Thurston's volumes, the writings of Hugh Nevill and H. C. P. Bell, etc.[2]

[1] *T. Cent. Imp.*, 1907, pp. 667–9; H. F. and F. A. Fernando, 1920; de Fonseka, 1921; Kuru-Utampala, 1953; [Gustavus Jayewardene *et al.*], *A Calumnious Imputation of the Kaurawa Refuted*, pamphlet, Wellawatte: 1955; A.B.C. Fernando, 1975; and Gomes, 1976.

[2] There is a striking congruence in the references supplied by different individuals (letters received by me from Karāva in the professions). Among the citations is the Nissanka Malla inscription which denigrates the Goyigama (translation by Dr Muller), even though it has no reference to the Karāva. The *Mukkara Haṭana* is a palm leaf document which purports to describe a conflict between the Mukkuvās and the Karāva, with the latter presented as a south Indian warrior group, i.e. a mercenary troop, imported in the service of the Sinhalese king. Though it describes a fifteenth-century event, internal evidence suggests that this document could not have been written before the late seventeenth century, and was probably compiled in the eighteenth century (opinion communicated personally by Dr G. P. V. Somaratne; also see Raghavan, 1961, p. 24).

The emphasis is on north Indian origins and Rajput warrior ancestry, though these connections are sometimes drawn in a migrant line through south India. Some versions imply that Karāva settlers even arrived with King Vijaya and with the sacred bo-tree; and the village of Moratuwa or Murathiha is said to have been settled in the time of Duttagāmani (second century B.C.) by a group of soldiers from a village of the same name in the present Kurunegala District, who were led by Prince Jayavarunakulasuriya Jayasiri Aditya of Rajputana.[3] In a book sponsored by a number of Karāva rich, on the other hand, M. D. Raghavan relied on the *Mukkara Haṭana* in concluding that the Karāva were of Kshātriya stock and that 'the Suriya clans' arrived in the reign of Sri Parakrama Bahu VI of Kotte (1412–68), though noting that 'a somewhat later date cannot altogether be rejected'.[4] They are explicitly said to have originated from south India, but a proviso notes that this conclusion 'does not preclude an ultimate northern origin lost in [the] mists of antiquity'.[5] In this and other versions the Karāva warriors are said to have served the kings of Kotte and been rewarded with the role of protectors of the coast. But in the course of time many of their descendants were forced to earn their livelihood as fishermen.

There can be no doubt that there were a number of Karāva settled along the coast in the sixteenth century when the

[3] Kuru-Utampala, 1953; *The Searchlight*, Christmas number, 1968; Gomes, 1976, pp. 23–4; and The Revd Dr P. A. J. B. Antoninus, 1976, pp. 52–6. Also see Weligamē Sri Sumangala, *Itihasa*, Colombo: Arnold Dias, 1876; L. Gabriel de Silva (ed.), *Aditya-Wamsa*, Colombo: H. W. Cave and Co., 1903; and Weerasuriya, 1948. The latter myth excludes the fact that the Rajput lineages of north India originated about the eighth century A.D., the most significant marker being the Agnikula ceremony, which is said to have taken place at Mount Abu in Rajasthan *c.* A.D. 700. The Rajput clans rose to political importance in the ninth and tenth centuries A.D. and eventually provided a convenient model for claims to Kshātriya status. Before this period a genuine Kshātriya would not have needed a Rajput model. There was another strategy, however, that continued to attract use even after the Rajput model was available: namely, manufacturing genealogical links with the classical Kshātriyas of the Mahabhārata. It is interesting that both models should permeate the Karāva literature of the British era. (In this summary I have been assisted by discussions with Dr Hermann Kulke of Heidelberg University; and Thapar, 1966, pp. 227–9.)

[4] 1961, pp. 24–5.

[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 13–14. He adds, 'The term Kaurava is evidently the Sinhalese form of pronouncing the Tamil Kauravar, which is the regular Tamil word for the Kaurava of the Mahabharata.'

Portuguese began to penetrate the island.[6] More significant is the reference to the Karāva as part of the caste structure in a Sinhalese poem known as the *Janavamsa*. Controversy is attached to the dating of this poem as well as to the interpretation of its text, in part because several versions have been produced. It is generally attributed to the fifteenth century. Though somewhat later datings have been suggested, it is significant that Hugh Nevill revised his earlier opinion (which placed the poem around A.D. 1420) and decided that it had been written 'in the early years of the Dambadeniya dynasty, say about A.D. 1240'.[7] Peebles speculates that this poem may have been an early and unsuccessful attempt 'to encourage the integration of migrant groups from south India into an unitary hierarchy'.[8] In the light of the evidence marshalled together within this book, the lack of success which he attributes to this effort is an opinion which does not carry conviction. What seems especially revealing is the fact that the *Janavamsa* treats the migrant communities as a Sinhalese element. This suggests that at the time at which it was composed the Karāva, Salāgama and Durāva immigrants had either resided in the island for some time, or performed a significant social role.

In any event, the advent of the Karāva does not seem to have been a single-step affair. They appear to have trickled in continuously or migrated *en bloc* from time to time. It is known that after their conquest of Mannar (on the northwest coast where Tamil-speakers resided) in 1560, the Portuguese brought in settlements of Parava and 'Careas', some of whom stayed on

[6] Abeyasinghe, 1966, pp. 180–1, 204–6; and C. R. de Silva, 1975, *passim*.

[7] Ariyapala, *Society in Medieval Ceylon*, 1st edn, Colombo: K. V. G. de Silva and Sons, 1956, pp. 290–1; and 2nd edn, 1968, appendix v; Hugh Nevill, 'The Jana-Wansa of Maha Thera Sri Buddha-Rakhita (*c.* 15th century A.D.)', *Taprobanian*, vol. 1, Feb.–Apr. 1886, pp. 74–93, 103–14; and Hugh Nevill, Catalogue in the British Library, prose 1, no. 27, pp. 75–6. Ryan (1953, p. 5) believes that this document may even be of a later origin than the fifteenth century, and Ralph Pieris has placed it in the late seventeenth century (1952, p. 412, n32). Nevill and Ariyapala must be considered more authoritative judges. Nevill observes that what appeared to be spurious versions of the *Janavamsa* were in existence. Though Nevill was partial to the Karāva views, unfortunately he relied on Battaramullē Sri Subhuti thero, a notorious Goyigama polemicist, for his translation. Karāva spokesmen place special reliance on Nevill's footnotes (especially pp. 109, n10, and 110, n11) and on one of the original versions of the *Janavamsa* in the Nevill MSS. collection in the British Museum (see OR 6609: 39, 40 and 41).

[8] 1973, p. 64.

permanently. The same initiating role cannot be discounted for southwestern Sri Lanka. The Portuguese were inclined to colonise the island with friendly Indians and the growth of the Karāva population may have been encouraged by this effort.[9]

It would appear, then, that the Karāva moved across at various times in the period extending from the thirteenth to the eighteenth centuries. The first date is derived from Nevill's dating of the *Janavamsa* and the origin myth relating to the Salāgama, the latter from oral traditions among some Karāva families which suggest migration at some time in the eighteenth century.[10]

As with the Durāva, Salāgama, Parava and Mukkuvā communities, there is little reason to doubt that they originated from the Dravidian world of south India. In his study of the local history of Madampe in the early sixteenth century, the names of several residents led C. R. de Silva to note the presence of 'a strong Dravidian tinge in the population'.[11] The kinship system, marriage customs, *kōlam* and banners of the Karāva, the place names of certain Karāva hamlets in Sri Lanka (e.g. Nallur and Panadura) and such Dravidian *vāsagama* names as *hetti*, *sellaperuma, kankānama* and *marakkala* are indicators of these south Indian connections.[12] The lateen rig and the outrigger used on Sinhalese fishing craft, old features that probably predate the Portuguese era, and the outstanding contrast between Sinhalese and Tamil fishing craft point to stronger connections with the western coast of India.[13] So do a number of other features: (i) the arrival in the island at various times, notably in the thirteenth century, of south Indian peoples described as 'Mukkaras' or 'Mukkuvas' (probably the same people) whose origins are believed to be in Kerala; and the presence today in the Puttalam area on the island's northwest coast of Tamil-speaking Mukkuvās who adhere to the

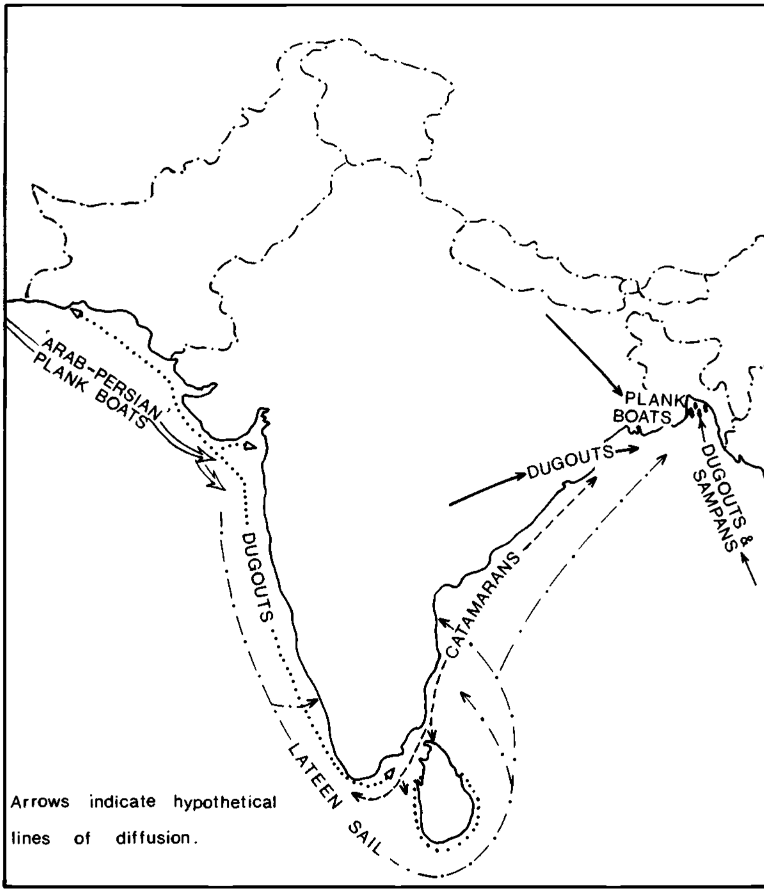
[9] C. R. de Silva, 1972, pp. 83–4, and personal communications from Dr C. R. de Silva. Also see Edmund Peiris, 1953, p. 17.

[10] E.g. traditions relating to the Warusahännädigē de Soysa and Hännädigē Pieris families (Roberts, 1975a, pp. 5–7). For the Salāgama myth, see note 17, p. 24.

[11] 1971, p. 26. Dr Kanapathypillai (personal communication) found this to be true in the late eighteenth century as well.

[12] David, 1968, pp. 37–8; Peebles, 1973, p. 172; Ryan, 1953, pp. 11, 104; and Raghavan, 1961, *passim* esp. pp. 37–45.

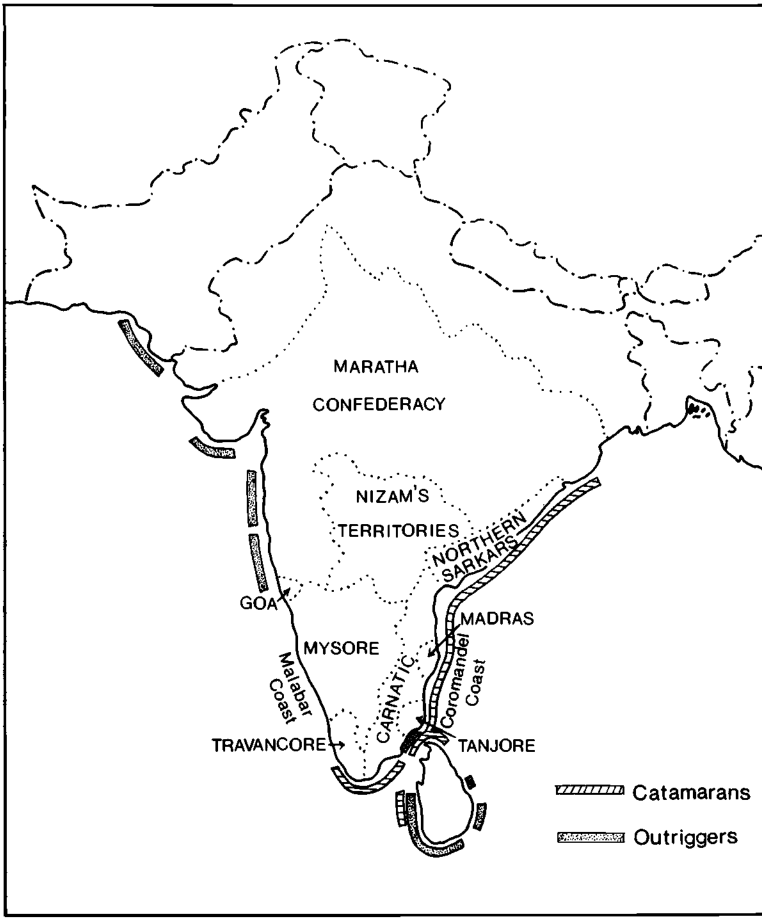
[13] Sopher, 1965, pp. 7–13; and below, pp. 22–3 and 88. Also see map 5.



5 The lines of cultural diffusion of craft types along the South Asian strand. Reproduced from D. E. Sopher, 'Indian boat types as a cultural geographic problem', *Bombay Geographical Magazine*, vol. XIII: 1, 1965

Roman Catholic or Muslim faiths, and their probable connections with the Malabar coast (i.e. Kerala) fishermen known as Mukkuvān;[14] (ii) the presence of a small community known as the Kannadiyans or Canarese in the island of Mannar who were probably from present-day Kanara or the area in Mysore

[14] *Documenta Indica*, ed. by José Wicks, Rome: 1948 *et seq.*, vol. IV, pp. 31–3 (citation supplied by Dr C. R. de Silva); Ryan, 1953, pp. 13–15; Thurston, 1909, vol. V, pp. 106–17; Kulasuriya, 1976, pp. 139–40; and Indrapala, 1965, pp. 368ff.



6 Location of catamarans and outriggers on the South Asian strand. Reproduced from D. E. Sopher, 'Indian boat types as a cultural geographic problem', *Bombay Geographical Magazine*, vol. XIII: 1, 1965

formerly known as Kannada;[15] (iii) the Portuguese and Dutch practice of bringing over slaves, mercenary soldiers and 'coolies' from the Kanara and Malabar coasts;[16] (iv) the origin

[15] Edmund Peiris, 1953, pp. 13–15. Also see the relevant enclosures in Reports on Castes and Services in CO 54/71, Brownrigg to Bathurst, no. 290, 17 July 1818 (hereafter cited as RCS in 1818).

[16] *Memoirs of Van Goens 1663–1675*, 1932, pp. 9, 20, 30; and C. R. de Silva, 1972, pp. 187–8.

myth of the Salāgama which locates the birthplace of their founding fathers, a number of weavers (*pēsakārayō*), at a specific spot (either 'Chale' or 'Damba Diewa') on the Malabar coast, from whence they are alleged to have been brought to Sri Lanka in the thirteenth century;[17] (v) the origin myth of the Durāva which describes their lineal ancestors as royal attendants to Pandyan princesses from Madurai;[18] and (vi) the manner in which the label 'Malabar' became part of the vocabulary of the European powers, initially being employed to describe Malayālis but more latterly receiving greater catholicity and encompassing virtually all Dravidians in Sri Lanka, even the Ceylon Tamils.[19]

The emigration of families and colonies who came to be known as Karāva must be seen as part of a two-way flow of people and goods between the island and the Indian subcontinent, specifically the southern part of peninsular India – transactions which made for a considerable heterogeneity in Sinhalese culture and facilitated the gradual and partial incorporation of new migrants into this culture. The linkages between south India and Sri Lanka were at once cultural, political and economic. The kings of Kotte were descendants of a family of merchants of Malayāli origin and tended to choose some of their brides from princely lines in south India. It is suspected that Parakramabahu VI (*c.* 1411–67) was a Tamil and it is established that Bhuvenaka Bahu VI (*c.* 1469–77) was a Tamil named Sempahap Perumal. The latter brought his henchmen (*paddeittalewan*) from India.[20] Such Indians as Arittakeevendu Perumal and the Alagakkonaras are known to have risen to high office and a few are known to have married into influential or rising Sinhalese families; for even in the early

[17] Ralph Pieris, 1952, pp. 413–14; Nevill, 'Jana-Wansa', 1886; *Memoir of Jan Schreuder, 1762*, 1946, p. 74; de Jonville, 1803, pp. 440–4; A. de A. Rajapakse, 1816; de Saram, 1906, p. 9; Johnston, 1835, pp. 332–4; and Sampson Rajapakse, 1912. Also see Abeyasinghe, 1966, pp. 139–40; and P. E. Pieris, 1950, p. 545; and Christoffel de Saram's Report in RCS in 1818, fols. 98–100.

[18] Nevill, 'Jana-Wansa', 1886, pp. 86, 108; and Peebles, 1973, p. 64.

[19] *Memoirs of Van Goens 1663–1675*, 1932, p. 9n (by E. Reimers); and most early-nineteenth-century British literature.

[20] G. P. V. Somaratne, 1975, pp. 48–52, 97ff, 111, 140 and 152; Kulasuriya 1976; personal communication from Dr Somaratne; and *History of Ceylon*, Colombo: 1960, vol. I, pt II pp. 653–9, 713ff. Also see Roberts, 1975a, pp. 14–15; C. R. de Silva, 1972, p. 7; Abeyasinghe, 1969, pp. 104–6; and Raghavan, 1961, pp. 37–40.

nineteenth century the high status Goyigamas were not unwilling to contract marriages with the 'Malabars and Chetty people'.[21] At least two Sinhalese documents of the 'medieval era' refer to Indian warriors who offered their services to the kings of Kotte and received lands in return; and in the early seventeenth century the kings of Kandy drew on the military assistance of the *vaḍuga* (northern warriors) of Telugu stock from Madura – a connection which paved the way for matrimonial alliances with the Nayaks of Madura and eventually resulted in the accession of the Nayakkar dynasty to the throne of Kandy.[22] Just as significant as these political connections were those of commercial intercourse. Sri Lanka was part of an inter-Asian trading network, in which the exchanges between the island and the Malabar and Coromandel coasts were particularly strong. As with Indian Moors who settled on the island coast and took local brides, it is to be suspected that Dravidian traders and adventurers followed the same course.

As suggested by my earlier comments, the advent of the Portuguese probably strengthened this two-way flow between peninsular India and Sri Lanka. The connections with the Malabar and Coromandel coasts in particular must have been reinforced. Portuguese sources from the sixteenth century reveal the presence of a few 'Carea' settlements on the Coromandel coast, besides several Mukkuvā and 'Paravar' settlements. These groups appear to have had a sense of distinctiveness and their relations were not always harmonious. Despite the fact that the Karāva and Parava shared the link of the Catholic religion, there is at least one reference to a Karāva–Parava clash.[23] In the long run, nevertheless, there is reason to surmise that the Karāva and Parava may have intermingled to some extent in Sri Lanka as well as the Coromandel coast. A number

[21] Citations above; Peebles, 1973, p. 58, *re* Don Francisco Dias Bandaranaike; Dias Bandaranayake, 1947; and 'Petition . . . from Fisher Caste, of different stations . . .' encl. in CO 54/131 (hereafter cited as Karāva Petition, 1830). The quotation is from the last-named source, which also claimed that occasionally the Goyigama married among the Karāva.

[22] The *Mukkara Haṭana* (see above, n. 2); the *Irugal Bandaravalīya* in the British Library, OR. 6615: 55, 56, 70, 530 (citation supplied by Dr C. R. de Silva); and Dewaraja, 1972, pp. 23–4. Also see Ryan, 1953, p. 11n and Kulasuriya, 1976, pp. 139–46.

[23] *Documenta Indica*, (see above, n. 14), vol. III, pp. 34–5; vol. VIII, p. 234; and vol. VIII, p. 617. Information supplied by Dr C. R. de Silva.

of Parava have been resident in the Negombo area along the west coast of Sri Lanka since the early sixteenth century at the very least. The Negombo and Chilaw localities in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (and earlier) contained several Sinhalese villages whose Karāva Sinhalese residents were Tamil-speakers, while some used a Tamil script. The Hindu background of the Karāva within this area or its offshoots has been documented by Raghavan, while a Karāva booklet noted in 1890: 'The Karawe of the Western and Southern Provinces talks Sinhalese, but his brethren of the Negombo, Chilaw, Putlam, Calpentyn, Manaar, Batticaloa and Trincomalee Districts use Tamil.'[24] Quite incidentally, and significantly, the same source refers to 'the rich Paravirs or Parathirs of Ceylon' as 'their agnates', that is, as the agnates or patrilineal relatives of the Karāva. The Tamil caste in the northern parts of Ceylon, the Karayār, were also treated as part of the same stock.[25]

This points to connections between the Karāva, Karayār and Parava in India at some stage in the past. Evidence of such links is not confined to a common association with fishing, or to their own tenuous beliefs in a distant relationship. The Parava (Paravans) in south India also have an origin myth which links them with the lunar race, the Kauravas of the Mahabhārata, who sought to secure the throne of Hastinapura. Like the Karāva in Sri Lanka, they too display at their wedding feasts the banners and emblems associated with the lunar race and take pride in it. In this manner the Tamil-speaking Paravans, mostly 'fishermen on the sea coast' in the Tinnevelly and Madura districts opposite Sri Lanka across the Gulf of Mannar, claimed to be Kshātriyas of the Pandyan line of kings.[26]

The links go yet further. Similar self-perceptions of a high status deriving from Kshātriya ancestry were shared by at least

[24] Dharmaratna, 1890, p. 5. Also see Ryan, 1953, p. 104; and 'Petition from Inhabitants of Kaymal Pattu', n.d. in CO 416/31 fol. 364 which pertained to the 'Fishers' and was signed and written in Tamil (citation from Dr Patrick Peebles).

[25] Dharmaratna, 1890, p. v and *passim*; the Antoninus, 1976. The former was a joint effort in which several members of the Karāva intelligentsia participated. On the Parava, see Casiechitty, 1837, pp. 130–4.

[26] Thurston, 1909, vol. VI, pp. 140–55 esp. 142–3; Manoel Barradas, 1896; Weerasuriya, 1948, p. 23; and H. R. Pate, compiler, *Madras District Gazetteer*, vol I, Madras: Government Press, 1917, pp. 123–4.

two other groups of fishermen along the east coast of peninsular India at the beginning of this century, when Thurston collected his material. One group were the Pattanavans along the coast from Tanjore to the Kistna river, the other, the Palle in the Telugu-speaking country. Thurston found the Palle claimed 'for themselves a higher position than that which [was] accorded to them by other castes, and call[ed] themselves Agnikula Kshatriyas'. The Pattanavans '[gave] themselves high sounding caste titles' including such titles as Varunakula Vellala or Varunakula Mudali or Kurukula *vamsam*, which implied descent from Kuru, the ancestor of the Kauravas.[27] The Palle who fished were known as Palle Kariyalu; and the Pattanavans were also known popularly as the 'Karaiyan', which is the Tamil word meaning 'of the coast' or 'the sea coast people' – precisely the origin of the term 'Karayār' in the Tamil areas of Sri Lanka.[28]

The precise sequence and nature of these connections are beyond my capacities of explanation. What is significant is the extent to which a number of fishing communities in the southern part of the sub-continent were adopting the Kshātriya model as a defence mechanism and a means of enhancing their caste status; in short, they reflect the process of Sanskritisation according to the Kshātriya model, which is better known among scholars today as Kshātriyaisation. As originally formulated by M. N. Srinivas, the term 'Sanskritisation' referred to the process by which a caste of traditionally low status rose to a higher position in the hierarchy 'by adopting vegetarianism and teetotalism, and by Sanskritising its ritual and pantheon – the reference group being the Brahmins'.[29] Since its original formulation the concept of Sanskritisation has been elaborated and refined. Among the elaborations is attention to the fact that caste mobility was attempted or achieved through models other than the Brahmin, that is, through Kshātriya, Vaishya and Sudra models as well.[30] The Kshātriya model has

[27] Thurston, 1909, vol. v, pp. 486–7; and vol. vi, pp. 177–9.

[28] *Ibid.*, vol. vi, pp. 177–9; vol. iii, pp. 249–50; and vol. iv, p. 155.

[29] 1952, p. 30 and *passim*. Also see chapter on 'Sanskritization', 1967, pp. 1–45.

[30] D. F. Pocock, 'The movement of castes', *Man*, vol. lv, 1955, pp. 71–2; Srinivas, 1962 and 1967, pp. 30–42 esp. 30–1; Stein in Silverberg (ed.), 1968, pp. 78–94; Surajit Sinha, 1962; and Hermann Kulke, 1976.

been particularly popular. This was also true of peninsular and southern India, though there were 'no genuine Kshatriyas and Vaishyas' in these areas originally and though the political terrain was characterised by the alliances of Peasant and Brahmin castes.[31] Indeed, the very absence of Kshātriyas in most regions of peninsular India encouraged emergent or dominant Peasant castes to claim Kshātriya status: for there were no long-resident Kshātriya castes who would contest a rising caste's claims to Kshātriya status and wield coercive sanctions in defence of the *status quo*, as occurred in parts of north India. So that the Kshātriya castes found in these regions today represent local or migrant castes who have successfully (that is, conceded by others) claimed such a position by virtue of their occupation, martial skills and political dominance. The popularity of the Kshātriya model within the domain of Tamil culture is also reflected in the Sangam poems which 'bear clear witness of the eagerness with which all the kings of the Chēra, Chōla, and Pandyan kingdoms sought to connect themselves with the occurrences in the Great War (Mahabharata) between the Kauravas and the Pandyas'.[32]

The information on the Karāva which has been assembled here and Thurston's information on the Palle, Pattanavan and Paravan must be appraised against this background. The beliefs of all these communities add a few more examples to a long list which reflects the process of Kshātriyaisation or partial Kshātriyaisation. This background also indicates that the Kshātriyaisation of the Karāva probably commenced in south India – a suggestion which was made long ago by Paul E. Pieris and has been supported more recently by P. V. J. Jayasekera.[33] Advantages may also have been attached to this transfer of residential venue from India to Sri Lanka. The question arises whether, as in peninsular India,[34] the spatial mobility of a caste

[31] Srinivas, 1962, p. 66; and Stein, 1967–8. Indeed, K. M. Panikkar has even argued that there has been no such caste as the Kshātriya during the last 2,000 years (*Hindu Society at the Cross Roads*, Bombay: 1955, p. 9).

[32] K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Culture and History of the Tamils*, Calcutta: K. L. Mukhopadyay, 1964, p. 12.

[33] P. E. Pieris, 1913, vol. 1, p. 138; and Jayasekera, 1970, p. 44. The language in which they have couched this suggestion is, of course, different from the conceptualisation reported in my text.

[34] Stein in Silverberg (ed.), 1968.

or group of people assisted their advance in social and political status and enabled them to secure high caste rank in their new residential locality. This question raises a number of speculations. If there is a particle of truth in the Karāva mythology regarding their warrior roles, there is a possibility that some Karāva headmen rendered useful military assistance to the kings of Kotte and were rewarded with certain privileges; alternatively, that some Indian mercenary commanders were rewarded with the roles of headmen over Karāva migrants on the coast, and were supported in this position with certain symbols of status.[35] To this speculation, one can append a further possibility which is suggested by the somewhat contrasting fortunes of the Karāva and Karayār within the island, and the fact that the small communities of peasant Mukkuvās and Vaggai in the sparsely populated Puttalam and Anuradhapura localities have acquired high caste roles which provide them with superordinate positions in terms of the customary rules of etiquette, and entitle them to ritual caste services from the appropriate lower status castes in the vicinity:[36] namely, the speculative possibility that a migratory movement to another linguistic region might provide social and political benefits. This corpus of speculations is among the series of issues that are encompassed by the concluding analysis in the final chapters of this book.

In addition it seems probable that the Christianisation of some Parava and some Karāva began in India rather than in Sri Lanka. There is little doubt that the Portuguese and Goan missionaries had considerable success in their proselytisation work among the Karāva. Though allowance must be made for Portuguese exaggerations, it is clear that a number of mass

[35] See especially the family traditions in the ola leaf document held by the Lindamulagē de Silvas of Moratuwa (a translated version is in *T. Cent. Imp.*, 1907, pp. 667–9). In the light of the island's historical links with the Malabar area, it may also be of significance that Malabar society in pre-British times was 'martially oriented', the political organisation of villages being directed towards the mustering of militia (Miller, 1954, pp. 414–15). Also see Kulasuriya, 1976, pp. 139–40 and *passim*.

[36] Ryan, 1953, pp. 140–2. The reference here is to the Tamil-speaking Roman Catholic Mukkuvās rather than the Muslim Mukkuvās in the same areas. The Vaggai might now be viewed as a Goyigama sub-caste but were probably 'of comparatively late South Indian origin', according to Ryan.

conversions occurred: there is one spectacular claim in 1556 of 'more than 70,000 *careas* [Karāva] with their Pantagatim' being converted.[37] The more substantial expansion in the number of Catholics in the Sinhalese areas occurred in the early seventeenth century rather than in the sixteenth century. Only the grossest of guesswork estimates can be presented. Figures of 175,000 (Abeyasinghe) and 250,000 (Arasaratnam) have been suggested for the number of Catholics in the Maritime Provinces as a whole during the seventeenth century.[38] Allowing for those in the Jaffna Peninsula and the Tamil areas this would give a range of 100,000 to 175,000 for the old Kotte Kingdom, or Portuguese Kotte as it might be called. C. R. de Silva leans towards the lower figure. Since the population of this territory may have been in the region of 3.0 to 3.5 lakhs (300,000–350,000), this means that at least one-third of the Sinhalese population in Portuguese Kotte were Catholics. The Karāva Catholics were only one segment, if a substantial one, of this Catholic populace. But the more significant fact is that the majority of the Karāva were Catholic.[39] Some of these conversions were merely nominal. A good many reverted to Buddhism subsequently. A few made a convenient shift to the Protestant religions favoured by the Dutch and the British. A significant minority, however, remained Catholic. Even today, a broad stretch of the littoral from the northern suburbs of Colombo to Chilaw has a Catholic majority (drawn from all castes and including the Parava). In Sri Lanka as a whole, a substantial proportion of the Sinhalese Christian population today is believed to be Karāva.[40]

There is little doubt that the indigenous Catholics benefited considerably from their religious stance in Portuguese times. Catholics were not subject to the discriminatory harassment and persecution directed against Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims. They received preferential judicial treatment and were

[37] Queyroz, 1930, pp. 326–7; and Abeyasinghe, 1966, pp. 202–5.

[38] Abeyasinghe, 1969, p. 102; and Arasaratnam, 1958, p. 217.

[39] C. R. de Silva, 1975, p. 84, and personal communication. Also see C. R. de Silva, 1972, pp. 239–42. He is also inclined to think that in the late sixteenth century the majority of converts were Karāva; that is, the initial Portuguese missionary successes were largely among the Karāva.

[40] Ryan, 1953, p. 105. The Christian population of Sri Lanka today is just below 8 per cent.

exempt from some taxes (e.g. the *marāla* or death duty).[41] The people of Negombo, for instance, some 2,000 'souls' in the eyes of the Europeans, were 'free from all taxes'. And when five Karāva chiefs from Chilaw were baptised at a public ceremony in 1606, the Portuguese Captain-General 'was pleased to grant them many favours and privileges in order to cause the envy of the other gentiles who might thus be led to follow their example'.[42]

In sum, then, the Portuguese, the Portuguese language, Catholicism, the Parava, the Karayār, the Karāva and possibly others (e.g. Mukkuvās, Vaggai, Pattanavans), all these descriptive terms embody intimate connections in the patterns of cultural relations, cultural diffusion, migration and trade along the coasts of the southern part of peninsular India and the island of Sri Lanka from the sixteenth century onwards, if not earlier. A more precise delineation of these patterns in historical sequence calls for research which traverses, so to speak, long stretches of this coastline, the material in numerous archives and the daunting obstacle of several languages (Malayālam, Tamil, Sinhalese, Portuguese and even perhaps Kannada). (See maps 4 and 5.)

The advent of the Dutch and the British did not disrupt this two-way flow in trading and cultural relations.[43] Indeed, in annulling a Dutch regulation which prohibited Indian traders from residing in the island for more than three months, the British administration encouraged the penetration of Indian capital into the island.[44] At this stage, the trading connections appear to have been principally with the Coromandel coast: 'The natives of the Coromandel coast . . . have the greatest commercial intercourse with the ports of Ceylon. Many come here to reside in them for years, carrying on a brisk trade and forming connections with families which are of the same caste as themselves', wrote one observer in 1817.[45]

Thus, migrant Dravidian peoples have regularly fertilised

[41] Abeyasinghe, 1966, pp. 204–14; C. R. de Silva, 1972, pp. 237–46; and Malalgoda, 1976, pp. 48–9, 93–105, 258.

[42] *Memoirs of Van Goens 1663–1675*, 1932, p. 8; and Gomez, 1916, p. 222.

[43] For the Dutch period, see Arasaratnam, 1958, chap. VII; 1967; and 1971a.

[44] CO 416/31 [a petition], fol. 641.

[45] 'Ceylon in 1816–1817', *Monthly Literary Register*, vol. I:II Nov. 1893, p. 254.

and added to the Sinhalese population in Sri Lanka during recent centuries. While this process was more pronounced in the coastal territories, it was by no means confined to this area. Several Navandanna families in the Kandyan Kingdom are known to have 'descended from Pandiyan and other Indian craftsmen settled in Ceylon by the kings of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries'.[46]

A note on Sinhalese demography

These outlines on the migrant elements in the Sinhalese population and the speculative views on the origins of the Karāva caste can be rendered more meaningful for our subsequent course by providing data on the Sinhalese population within the island from the sixteenth to the early nineteenth centuries. Only the crudest of estimates are feasible. In the mid-sixteenth century, according to C. R. de Silva, the Kingdom of Kotte (see map 1) probably had about 4.5 lakhs of people (450,000), the Kingdom of Jaffna about 1.0 to 1.5 lakhs and the Kandyan Kingdom, inclusive of the east coast, another 1.5 lakhs. By the middle decades of the seventeenth century he conjectures that the population within Portuguese Kotte had declined by about one lakh, while that in the Kandyan Kingdom had risen somewhat. In sum, he surmises that the total Sinhalese population in the mid-seventeenth century was in the region of 550,000 to 600,000.[47] About 180 years later, in the imperfect censuses conducted by the British in the Maritime Provinces in the years 1814 and 1824, the population was recorded at 492,083 and 595,105 respectively. In 1821 that of the Kandyan Provinces was estimated to be 256,835. This would place the total population in the island during the 1820s at about 8.5 lakhs (851,940) and the total Sinhalese population at 6.5 lakhs. It would be advisable to consider this nineteenth-century series of figures as underestimates. But the message is clear. The population was thinly spread.

The demographic information regarding the Sinhalese castes is very limited. The censuses since 1871 do not record caste data. The only censuses that do are those for the Maritime

[46] Codrington, 1909, p. 221.

[47] C. R. de Silva, 1975, pp. 83–4, and personal communication.

Provinces in the years 1814 and 1824. (These are presented here in tables 1–4.) Unfortunately, we lack corresponding data for the Kandyan Provinces. Since the Karāva, Salāgama and Durāva castes were largely Low-Country Sinhalese castes, it is a reasonable assumption that their numbers in the Kandyan districts at this stage were statistically insignificant.[48] On this basis it is possible to arrive at a rough estimate of their percentage proportions in the Sinhalese population during the 1820s: for the Karāva, 8.4 per cent; for the Durāva, virtually 3.0 per cent; and for the Salāgama, 4.0 per cent. These should perhaps be treated as slight underestimates which do not take into account the Salāgama and Karāva villages in the Kandyan country (see table 5).

From our position in the twentieth century, an intimate familiarity with the island terrain and its man-modified ecology is likely to produce distortions in our attempts to capture the implications of these figures. It might be feasible to adjust our perspectives to the pre-British days when there were no macadamised roads and travel was mostly on foot or in palanquins; when even carts were few and far between[49] and overland transport was largely dependent on pack-cattle, elephants and the shoulders of men with their *pingo* loads (except in areas that were served by navigable rivers and the canals built by the Dutch). But one needs to go further. One must blot out conceptions of settlements that straddle the countryside in ribbon patterns along the principal lines of communication. One must etch in considerable areas of uncultivated highland and jungle, areas which enveloped the principal item of export, cinnamon. One must also include within the jungle, and around the villages, many patches of previously chena-ed land – for shifting cultivation was not uncommon in the southwestern portions of the Low-Country even during the first decades of the nineteenth century. The villages must be seen as sporadic and dispersed for the most part; while the settlement pattern of each village must be viewed in a wide range of variations between a nucleated cluster and a dispersed collection of homesteads. Such considerations are as essential as the demographic data for our understanding of the social relations, the symbols of

48 See below p. 303.

49 Personal communication from Dr D. A. Kotelawele; and CO 416/2, A. 8, fol. 206.

social distance, the interaction between castes and the caste system in the Sinhalese areas during the three centuries stretching from the 1500s to the early nineteenth century. Within the local arena encompassed by a village settlement, or its regular social network within the walking distance (considerable in those days) of villagers, social relations must have been influenced by the intimacy of contact associated with regular face-to-face dealings and a leisurely pace of life. The anonymity and freedom associated with large conglomerations of people would have been missing. Social sanctions would have been that much more effective, deviations that much more difficult.

3
Caste among the Sinhalese

It is one of the arguments in this book that the place of the Karāva caste in the changing system of caste stratification in Sri Lanka was of considerable importance for the social and economic advances secured by some of the Karāva. It follows that consideration should be paid to the system of caste interaction among the Sinhalese and the place of the Karāva within this structure (viewed morphologically) before the Karāva elite began to make its presence felt. Before taking up these insular details, however, readers will be introduced to the general principles of caste interaction in the Indian cultural region. In presenting this generalised description, the opportunity is taken to introduce concepts which will be referred to from time to time in the course of this book.

Caste in the Pan-Indian context

Caste is a social and cultural category. It is an identity, a label. But it is also more than that. As Edmund Leach has stressed, 'a caste does not exist by itself. A caste can only be recognised in contrast to other castes with which its members are closely involved' in a network of relationships. 'These relationships extend to economic, religious and political spheres; only kinship is excluded.'[1]

Caste is also a quality. 'The quality resides in the blood. And blood is graded from very pure to extremely defiling.'[2] Iṇ Sinhalese society this is expressed in the concepts of *pirisidu* (pure) and *hoňda* (good) as opposed to *apirisidu* (impure) and

[1] 1961b, pp. 5, 7, 11; and 1961a, pp. 26–7. One cannot, however, agree with his statement that 'People of different caste are, as it were, of different species – as cat and dog.' [2] Yalman, 1961, p. 87.

naraka (bad). Those bearing the latter quality are, therefore, of low status – *hīna* or *pahaṭ jāti*. Such concepts embody the notion of a hierarchy. The hierarchical concept stems from the opposition between the pure and the impure (the polluted) which is one of the organising principles of Indian thought and Indian society. Indeed, in Louis Dumont's controversial analysis, it is *the* organising concept.[3] The application of these concepts of hierarchy and of purity:pollution in a network of transactions between distinct categories involves, as a concomitant, the concept of 'social distance' separating caste categories or clusters of such categories. As this network of relationships constitutes a structure, one can speak of the 'structural distance' between castes.[4] It is essential for such a system that each of the caste categories should be clearly identified and that the boundaries between each category should be maintained. This is normally achieved through the principle of caste endogamy in marriage and through customs governing life-style and behaviour. The successful penetration of these boundaries by individuals through convenient manipulations – not uncommon in India and Sri Lanka – does not negate this principle; on the contrary, such practices tend to affirm it.

These principles and customs were more pronounced and effective in the past than they are today and one benefits here from a shift to the past tense. Such customs perpetuated overt means by which castes or caste clusters could be identified and social distance should be expressed. They could pertain to nomenclature and patronymics, commensality, dietary habits, forms of dress, facial cosmetics, forms of address, seating arrangements, modes of travel and types of dwelling place. Some of these facets in life-style were regulated in minute detail and customary etiquette interfered with many aspects of the daily routine. This was the arena of caste symbolism. One's occupation was one part of this symbolic world. Certain occupations were considered polluting or demeaning. Few men of high caste would consider taking up such occupations as a regular means of livelihood.

Though certain similarities can be perceived, caste symbolism varied from region to region and was amenable to ma-

[3] 1972. [4] E.g. Srinivas, 1967, p. 17.

nipulation and change. Among the Sinhalese in Sri Lanka expressions of social distance have not been as rigorous and wide-ranging as those of India. 'Close physical contact [had] no caste significance, provided the conventional symbols of distance [were] not lacking.' Nor did the Sinhalese develop the 'intricate food tabus and cooking practices associated with caste differences' which the Brahmin-dominated Hindu world evolved in India. There do not appear to have been any 'religious bases for distinction in eating'; it was (and is) a 'straightforward manifestation of social distance'.[5] However, the idea of pollution through eating remained a basic component in caste-regulated Sinhalese thought. While a higher caste man could have concubines of lower caste without great shame, they would on no account admit to eating with them.[6] In fact, for contemporary Sri Lanka, Bryce Ryan believes that in some localities 'the caste status hierarchy can be most clearly determined by the patterns of permissible eating'.[7]

The patterns of permissible eating within homes, that is. Caste symbolism was (and is) situational in its operation; so that some interactional contexts were caste-free.[8] Ryan, for instance, found that the use of a common drinking well for water was not frowned upon. And even in the more 'traditional' villages, Goyigama and low status non-Goyigama would not only work together out in the fields, but eat together on such occasions.[9] At ceremonies where several castes partook of food, however, the Goyigama would have only Goyigama 'seated at the common board'. Familial ceremonies associated with *rites de passage* and exorcism were important occasions for the expression of caste symbolism and social distance. But beyond such occasions caste etiquette has always been 'most clearly manifest in any behaviour touching the home'. The forms of greeting and the seating arrangements adopted during casual

[5] Ryan, 1953, pp. 158–9.

[6] Knox, 1911, pp. 105, 148; and Yalman, 1961, pp. 97–8. [7] Ryan, 1953, p. 159.

[8] David G. Mandelbaum, *Society in India*, University of California Press, 1970, pp. 182–4. Also see Ralph Pieris, 1956, pp. 174, 176.

[9] *Ibid.*, pp. 158–9. I suspect that certain case norms would have been adhered to even at these workmen's meals. Certainly, in the early nineteenth century, higher caste members in a labour group cultivating a lower caste man's field would not eat food prepared by the latter though they would take drinks from the same source (Replies of the Principal Mudaliyars and Landholders . . . in CO 416/2, A. 6, Q. 4).

visits to one another's houses were governed by the prevailing etiquette. In many Sinhalese districts its most concrete manifestation was the *kolombuva*, a low stool or block of wood kept by people of higher status for use by their inferiors. Another context in which ritual status was expressed was that of village or locality festivals at the *vihāra* or at the *dēvala*, or after the harvest. As public gatherings these were particularly significant. In the past, such ceremonies tended to draw in all the castes in the locality. Even those service castes who were not associated with familial ceremonies (the Badahäla, or potters, for instance) were drawn into this ceremonial and ritual field.[10]

In Sri Lanka, the situational variation in caste etiquette and the differential assessment of the ingress and egress of bodily substance are seen in the differing attitudes to hypergamy and hypogamy. On no account would a higher caste woman be permitted sexual liaison with a man deemed lower in status. In contrast, hypergamous concubinage and casual liaisons between men of high caste and women of lower caste have been widely tolerated in Sinhalese society. The progeny of such unions would be defined according to the mother's caste.[11] Such liaisons were not viewed as a breach of caste endogamy, for these liaisons were not proper marriages. A marriage, in the Kandyan Sinhalese view, was an alliance of interhousehold cooperation and preferably entered into with kin (*nǟyo*). A marriage implied commensality, conjugality and kinship. With a cross-caste liaison, this was not feasible. Therefore, a regular hypergamous liaison, quite tautologically, was not marriage. P's concubine V was not his *pavula* (wife), simply his *gǟni* (woman). P's caste remained pure. As Nur Yalman has revealed, this approach has contributed powerfully to the resilience of caste endogamy and caste principles among the Kandyan Sinhalese.[12] It explains how, despite the decay in the institutional framework of caste in the face of social changes in

[10] This summary is based on Ryan, 1953, pp. 76–82, 153ff; Gombrich, 1971, pp. 300–17; Yalman, 1961; Ralph Pieris, 1956, pp. 169–87; and Leach, 1961a, pp. 23–8. The quotations are from Ryan.

[11] Yalman, 1961, pp. 97–8. However, note that the Dutch considered the cinnamon-peeling service so important that they decreed that all children (male and female) fathered by Salāgama should be treated as Salāgama (Koorundu, 1833, p. 270). How effective this breach of custom was remains in question.

[12] 1961, pp. 89–101, 110–11.

recent centuries, caste endogamy 'is as clearly marked as ever'.[13]

Supporting this tendency was the manner in which Sinhalese kinship functioned. Yalman has revealed in detail how the bilineal pattern of inheritance and the alliance function of marriage resulted in a 'centripetal tendency' in marriage patterns. The women in a family (also termed *pavula*) were married off to close kinsmen, 'or else that such strangers as were allowed to marry the women of the *pavula* [were] themselves incorporated into the *pavula*'.[14] And such strangers should be ritually acceptable, whether *de facto*, or through a combination of genealogical fiction and genealogical myopia. Among the Sinhalese, therefore, the 'tendency towards endogamy does not . . . arise from any "law" or custom imposed from above by caste councils; it is the result of preferences . . . The caste barriers are not "categorical imperatives" sanctioned by direct communal force, but are the cumulative result of individual decisions.'[15] In the circumstances it is not surprising that Knox's account of the seventeenth-century Kandyan Kingdom provides no indication of anything like the caste *panchayats* of India. Endogamy could survive without formal mechanisms.[16] However, as in India, in Sri Lanka in the past the Sinhalese kings undoubtedly supported the maintenance of caste principles. The murder of a high caste woman discovered in liaison with a man of lower caste would be recognised as legitimate by the king's officers and would in effect become a legal execution by local household action. Indeed, in the absence of pervasive Brahminical influences in the island it has been argued by Kitsiri Malalgoda and Ralph Pieris that 'the consolidation and legitimation of caste in Ceylon . . . was primarily a secular function mainly in the hands of the political authority, the king'.[17] In the light of Yalman's contemporary analysis, this may be a trifle overstated. In the past 150 years, certainly, caste endogamy has revealed a persisting strength without state support.

[13] Leach, 1961a, pp. 26–7. [14] 1961, p. 93. [15] Yalman, 1961, pp. 93, 95.

[16] 1911, pp. 105–14; and Ryan, 1953, pp. 79, 154. However, there are some suggestions that Goyigama chief headmen had jurisdiction over caste disputes in low caste villages (Hayley, 1923, p. 63).

[17] Malalgoda, 1976, p. 46; and Ralph Pieris, 1956, p. 180.

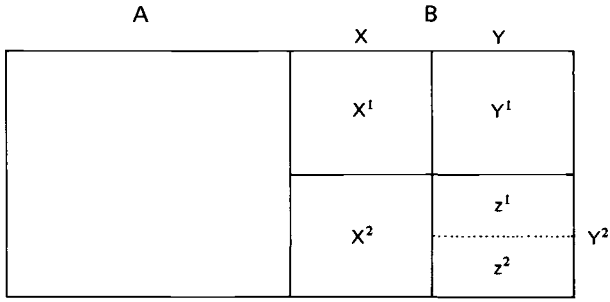
Yalman's account illustrates the flexibility of the Sinhalese caste system. In opposition to older opinions, scholarly writings since 1945 have shown this to be true of the Indian caste system as well. Given the Indian sub-continent's vast expanse of territory, caste inevitably took on local or regional patterns. These patterns were not always congruent with one another. One of the abiding questions in the academic world relates to the manner in which neighbouring caste hierarchies articulated with each other. Another vital question pertains to the relationship between these local and regional patterns and the simplified *varṇa* clusters and the general principles postulated in the doctrinal texts (which were penned by Brahmins).

Several scholars have attempted to classify the levels of the Indian caste system. Thus, Cohn has drawn distinctions between the *jāti* (the endogamous caste), *jat* (caste cluster) and *varṇa* levels. Bailey has argued that 'caste as *jāti* . . . is the main sociological referent of the word "caste" and that this unit has much greater "groupness" than "caste categories" or "caste" as *varṇa*'.[18] Richard Fox has drawn attention to the importance of various intermediary levels between *jāti* and *varṇa* as 'ideological links between the all-India statuses (based on attributes) and the local caste groups (based on interaction)'. He identifies five major levels:

1 Local caste or *jāti* group
2 Supra-local caste clusters or caste categories
3 Sub-regional *varṇa* categories
4 Regional *varṇa* schemes
5 The all-India *varṇa* scheme.[19]

There is a major problem with these classifications. As André Béteille notes, 'the word *jāti* does not have the one single meaning given to it by Bailey, but a plurality of meanings, including one which equates it with *varṇa*'.[20] In an article that has not received adequate attention Béteille charts a way out of this problem by bringing in Evans-Pritchard and describing the caste system as a segmentary system (see fig. 1).[21] This means that each Indian is a member of 'an expanding series of

[18] Cohn, 1968, p. 24; and Bailey, 1963, pp. 107–8.
[19] 1969, pp. 27–33, quotation p. 30. [20] 1954, p. 131.
[21] Evans-Pritchard, 1940, chap. IV, esp. pp. 144–50.



1 Outline of a segmentary structure by Evans-Pritchard
'When Z^1 fights Z^2 no other section is involved. When Z^1 fights Y^1, Z^1 and Z^2 unite as Y^2. When Y^1 fights X^1, Y^1 and Y^2 unite, and so do X^1 and X^2. When X^1 fights A, X^1, X^2, Y^1 and Y^2 all unite as B.'
Reproduced from E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 143–4

groups (or categories)', and that 'the caste system has a property which enables people to shift easily . . . from one referent to another, and to apply the same term *jāti* to *all* of them'. Therefore, the same man could describe himself as Vadadesha Vadama, Vadama, Smartha and Brahmin at different times. 'A Smartha sees himself as a Smartha in relation to a Shri Vaishnava, and as a Brahmin in relation to a non-Brahmin.' On these grounds, Béteille stresses that one cannot 'point to any particular level of segmentation and regard that as representing caste or *jāti*. What is constant is the *principle of segmentation*, not the basis of segmentation, nor its degree.'[22]

In the long-standing debate on the origins of the Indian caste system it has sometimes been held that caste emerged as a rationalisation and smoke-screen for gross inequalities in the distribution of power, as an instrument of class exploitation, which then perpetuated itself as an increasingly elaborate ideology in the hands of the Brahmins.[23] This controversial interpretation raises the classical question: what was the nature of the relationship between the religious and ideological dimension on the one hand, and the economic and political dimension on the other. The 'unresolved duality' between these

[22] 1964, pp. 130–4. Also see Carter, 1975.
[23] Thapar, 1966, pp. 37–40; D. D. Kosambi, 1956, pp. 15–16, 51–2, 83; Mencher, 1974, p. 469; Gould, 1971, pp. 9–12; and Meillassoux, 1973, pp. 89–111 esp. p. 108.

dimensions is addressed directly by Louis Dumont in his equally controversial attempt to provide a synthesising analysis of Indian caste. He sees the two dimensions, epitomised respectively in the Brahmin and the Kshātriya, as interdependent: 'In theory, the king has lost his religious prerogatives: he does not sacrifice, he has sacrifices performed. In theory, power is ultimately subordinate to priesthood whereas in fact priesthood submits to power.' In the last resort, however, Dumont insists that in the world view of Indians the Kshātriya is dependent upon the Brahmin, and remains his inferior. The religious dimension is primary. It encompasses the political and economic dimension – the secondary and encompassed dimension.[24]

I do not propose to get caught up in the throbbing debate on this issue. The foregoing summary is meant to illustrate the disagreement that surrounds the discussion relating to the degree to which any caste hierarchy is susceptible to the influence of political and economic power. At the empirical level it would seem that in a particular locality during a particular block of time, whether it is Bisipara in Orissa, Senapur in Uttar Pradesh, Radhanagar in Bengal, the Kathmandu valley in Nepal or the village of Welagoda in the dry zone highlands of Sri Lanka during the twentieth century, the status hierarchy in the ritual (religious) dimension could exist for a considerable length of time in unresolved duality and dissonance with the status hierarchy emanating from the differential control of valued resources.[25] Such discordant situations and periods must be allowed for in any analysis.

History also affords several instances when a local or regional caste hierarchy was amended in response to a major shift in the distribution of power.[26] Dumont's interpretation gains in synthesising value from its recognition of this circumstance and

[24] 1972; quotation from p. 111. Also see 'Symposium: The Contributions of Louis Dumont', *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. xxxv: 4, Aug. 1976, pp. 579–646; the review articles in the *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, N.S., 1971; and Jonathan Parry, 1974.

[25] Bailey, 1957; T. O. Beidelman, *A Comparative Analysis of the Jajmani System*, New York: 1959, pp. 18–19; Srinivas, 1962, pp. 45, 62; and 1967, pp. 13, 20–2; Nicholas, 1968, pp. 248–55; personal communication from Dr John Gray; and Ryan, 1953, pp. 221–4.

[26] E.g. Srinivas in Singer and Cohn (eds), 1968, pp. 189–91; and 1967, pp. 22, 28, 30–40, 90–4; Rowe, 1968; Sanyal, 1971; A. M. Shah, 'Political system in eighteenth century Gujarat', *Enquiry*, vol. 1, 1964, pp. 33–95.

its explanation for shifts in the middle layers of caste ranking in terms of the power wielded by kings or dominant castes, though his analysis would deny such plasticity at the hierarchical apex or at the bottom layer (the Untouchables).

In most present-day readings, then, caste hierarchy in the Indian sub-continent has been neither immutable nor rigid. Many writers agree that there was caste mobility 'in every period of Indian history'; and Burton Stein has even suggested that the medieval period was characterised by 'widespread and persistent examples of social mobility'.[27] There was a vagueness and lack of clarity in the regional and local caste hierarchies, especially in their middle reaches, which Srinivas believes to have been a positive aid to such adjustments in position. A general technique in this process was the use of the *varṇa* model as a general framework within which a specific claim to higher caste status was presented.[28] Among the factors generating such processes and influencing their outcome were the locally dominant castes, the kings or rajas, and spatial mobility.

As described by a number of scholars a 'dominant caste' refers to a caste which controls the economic resources in a particular area, occupies a high place in the local caste hierarchy and serves as a reference group for others in the area. The most important economic resource is land. Control over a sizeable amount of arable land means local dominance. In Srinivas' view, 'the existence of a congruence between landownership and high rank in the caste hierarchy has been widely observed', though he adds the proviso that this generalisation admits of exceptions. In many cases the dominance derived from the control of goods and services is seconded by numerical strength. Degrees of dominance must be allowed for. One can speak of 'decisive dominance', or mere 'dominance'. One can even refer to 'shared dominance', where two castes share power and status in a village or locality.[29] Srinivas even notes that the 'influence of the dominant caste seems to extend to all areas of social life',[30] but our reading of this statement must be modified by observations elsewhere which recognise the unresolved

[27] Srinivas, 1967, pp. 30–42 esp. 30–32; and Stein in Silverberg (ed.), 1968, p. 78.

[28] 'Varna and caste', 1962, pp. 63–9; and 1967, pp. 4–10.

[29] Srinivas, 1967, chap. 1, esp. pp. 7–14, 18–23. Also see Mayer, 1958; Srinivas, 1959; and Nicholas, 1968.

[30] 1967, p. 18.

duality between the religious and the politico-economic dimensions. For Srinivas is among those who have emphasised the prevalence of several contexts of interaction in any locality, so that a Brahmin may occupy a low position in the 'non-ritual context' and nevertheless carry prestige and receive respect in 'ritual and pollution contexts'.[31]

In India, in the past, one did not need to be Brahmin or Kshātriya in order to secure the position of a dominant caste. In many parts of India, 'landowning Peasant castes . . . [enjoyed] decisive dominance, or share[d] dominance with another caste drawn from the categories of Shudra, Kshatriya, or Brahmin'. The dominant castes sustained the local caste system and helped to maintain 'the structural distance between the different castes living within their jurisdiction'. In their strategic role they served as mediators of the *varṇa* model and were the best placed to manipulate mythology and social relations to suit their claims. 'Any caste that achieved political power at the local level could advance a claim to be Kshatriyas.'[32] In their strategic location, too, they served as a normative reference group, a model for emulation by the castes below them in the local hierarchy.[33]

Just as individual Brahmins in a client status were employed to legitimise claims to a higher status by a powerful caste or caste elite, so too could the king or ruling power in a region be used as a source of legitimation. In 'traditional India' the rulers 'had the power to promote as well as to demote castes', and often functioned 'as the final arbiters of the ranking of castes within their jurisdiction'.[34] It appears that men of low social origins who rose to the position of kings had little difficulty in claiming high caste status, usually on the Kshātriya model.[35] Hermann Kulke has also noted how kings and Brahmin priests sponsored the Kshātriyaisation of neighbouring tribes in order to extend their influence.[36]

Burton Stein has also brought out the manner in which spatial mobility was associated with caste mobility. The avail-

[31] *Ibid.*, p. 13; and 1952, p. 43.
[32] Srinivas, 1967, p. 93 and chap. 1; 1968, pp. 190–1; and 1962, pp. 63–9.
[33] Srinivas, 1967, pp. 10–23; and Runciman, 1966, pp. 11–12. Also see below, pp. 163, 223–4.
[34] Srinivas, 1967, pp. 40–2, 93.
[35] Srinivas, 1967, pp. 4, 31–2; and Stein in Silverberg (ed.), 1968, p. 91.
[36] 1976.

ability of arable land in India in the past as well as natural calamities encouraged such spatial movements. Such movements could generate new castes, as segments split from the parent body. They also permitted 'the mobile group . . . to assume new and prestigious cultural robes'. 'A family or group of families would have greater freedom to adopt the Sanskritic style of life in a new area where they were unknown than in their natal area where the locally dominant caste knew them.'[37]

In the previous chapter it has been observed that the processes of Sanskritisation and Kshātriyaisation were also employed as a means of consolidating caste mobility. In the period of British rule in India, Westernisation became an alternative and partially overlapping channel of mobility of the same type.[38] As formulated by Srinivas, *et al.*, however, these concepts of Sanskritisation, Kshātriyaisation and Westernisation involve an emphasis on the borrowing of status attributes – an adoption of cultural symbols. Owen Lynch has, therefore, called our attention to the necessity of extending the concepts to comprehend changes in the interrelations between castes; in other words, to encompass structural shifts. He suggests that these concepts should be brought within the general framework of reference group theory. So that Sanskritisation, Kshātriyaisation and Westernisation become the Indian equivalents of 'keeping up with the Joneses' and a special case of the general process of 'elite emulation'. For the understanding of any such process he suggests the need to distinguish between, at the least, three types of reference groups: (i) *the reference group of imitation*, whose values are regarded as norms worth emulation by some one or some group (XYZ) located outside this group; (ii) *the reference group of identification*, with which XYZ identifies itself and seeks to incorporate itself; (iii) *the negative reference group*, which is viewed as 'the enemy' and whose values and actions are regularly taken note of by XYZ so that XYZ's values and actions become dependent upon this negative reference group.[39] Once one brings in reference group theory one must also take note of the concept of relative deprivation.

[37] Stein in Silverberg (ed.), 1968, pp. 78–94; Srinivas, 1967, pp. 43–4; and 1962, p. 69.

[38] Srinivas, 1967, chap. 2; and 1968, pp. 191–4.

[39] Lynch, 1968, pp. 209–38 esp. 209–11, 236–8. The first two types could be overlapping. Nor is there any reason why XYZ could not be a member of the reference

Comparisons with others, or other groups, are inherent in this process; and with negative reference groups in particular, comparisons are liable to generate feelings of relative deprivation. Indeed, Lynch's third type might be redefined as a *comparative reference group*: to follow W. G. Runciman, 'the group whose situation or attributes a person contrasts with his own'.[40]

The morphology of caste among the Sinhalese

Among the Sinhalese in Sri Lanka the term used for caste is *jāti*. 'The term is associated with "birth" (*jātaka*) and carries the connotation of kind or category . . . But even single families can be referred to as *jāti* when contrasting them with others.'[41] Terms such as *gedara, vāsagama* and *vamsa*[42] are also employed to identify families and to distinguish status gradations between families within a caste. All castes are usually considered to be Sudra and there are no Brahmins. The *varṇa* categorisation seems to have been of little relevance till ambitious caste spokesmen imported the model in the nineteenth century.

As revealed in the demographic information contained in the previous chapter, another striking feature of the Sinhalese caste system is the fact that the Goyigama caste, the caste which was widely acknowledged to be the highest caste, was not only the largest single caste but constituted nearly one half or over one half of the Sinhalese population (see tables 1–5). The Goyigama population was (and is) also dispersed widely: 'Seldom can one list as many as twenty or thirty contiguous villages in any part of the island where the Goyigama would not be the largest single caste, and frequently the majority. The Goyigama are ubiquitous, except for *the narrow fringe* of villages along the ocean.'[43]

group of imitation. It should be stressed that a 'reference group' could be a single person.

[40] Runciman, 1966, pp. 9ff. Also see Tajfel, 1970; and H. H. Hyman, 'Reflections on reference groups', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, vol. xxiv, 1960. Runciman's typology differs a trifle from that of Owen Lynch. He also has a *normative reference group*: 'the group from which a person takes his standards'; and a *membership reference group*: 'the group from which the comparison is extended and to which (XYZ) feels that he belongs'. He stresses that the comparative and normative reference groups 'may overlap, and often do' (1966, pp. 11–12).

[41] Yalman, 1967, p. 61.

[42] All really referring to one's family name or patrilineal name, though the literal translations would be different.

[43] Ryan, 1953, p. 96. Emphasis added.

In the Sinhalese kingdoms of the past the principal landholders were from the Goyigama caste, while the principal chieftains and headmen were also drawn from the Goyigama aristocracy.[44] By and large, these features held true within the Maritime Provinces under the Portuguese and Dutch, and persisted into the early nineteenth century. It is therefore possible to describe the Goyigama as the dominant caste in every state that controlled the Low-Country Sinhalese districts and within every *kōralē* in these districts till the nineteenth century.[45]

In contrast with India, the island does not have villages with a large number of castes. To judge from present conditions and colonial records several villages had only two or three castes, while a large number of caste-homogeneous villages were found. A Goyigama village would therefore be served by service caste villages or named hamlets in the vicinity. And a caste-homogeneous non-Goyigama village or hamlet, say of the Rajaka caste, would perform caste services for several Goyigama villages in the locality. In this sense, within the agricultural areas the Goyigama replicated one of the features of Indian society and functioned as the pivot in a system of caste-regulated exchanges, identified by such terms as *divel* and *tovil*, which were similar to the Indian *jajmāni* system.[46] However, this similarity was embedded within a number of differences in the morphological structure of the respective caste systems. Besides those differences identified above, the Sinhalese caste system also differed from that in many parts of India in the degree of sub-caste fragmentation. The subsequent sections will illustrate these differences while supplying information that is relevant to this study and while describing the occupational diversification that occurred in the three to four centuries preceding the advent of the British.

Castes and occupations: 1500s–1800s Given their numerical proportion, it is hardly surprising that the Goyigama people earned their livelihood from a wide range of occupations. While

[44] Knox, 1911, p. 80; Dewaraja, 1972, chap. 3; Kanapathypillai, 1970; and Roberts, 1975a, chap. 3.

[45] This is even more true of the Kandyan Kingdom. It is a point of view that is disputed by Peebles (1973, pp. 63ff). See below, p. 65.

[46] See Gunasekara, 1965; Yalman, 1961; and Kolenda, 1963.

it is a moot point as to how far back nineteenth-century evidence can be extended, it appears that in the eighteenth century, if not earlier, the *rājakāriya* services of the Goyigama also included a wide range of menial duties, while a partisan publication claimed that there were a few Goyigama fishing hamlets along the southwestern coast.[47] These variations in actual occupation did not prevent the Goyigama from being described as 'cultivators' or the 'cultivators caste' – the reference here being to the cultivation of paddy. It was this association which the European officials brought into play in their efforts to understand the caste system and caste status in the Sinhalese areas.

This does not mean that all paddy cultivators in the Sinhalese areas were Goyigama. Paddy cultivation and swidden agriculture on chena land (*hēna*) were easily the most widespread occupations in Sri Lanka. The service castes, the Navandanna, Badahäla, Beravā, Rajaka, etc., were primarily cultivators and only secondarily engaged in their respective trades.[48] This was an important structural feature and presents another striking contrast with many parts of India.

There were, however, partial or wholesale exceptions to this facet of the Sinhalese caste structure. Among the non-Goyigama castes, as a consequence of their late arrival, the Salāgama, Durāva and Karāva do not seem to have been widely engaged in paddy cultivation when the Portuguese *tombos* (land registers) were compiled in the early seventeenth century, and even perhaps in Dutch times in the mid-eighteenth century.[49] Nor did they enter into intercaste service transactions of the ritual patron–client sort with the Goyigama. That is, they were not linked with the Goyigama in traditional *divel–tovil* exchanges.

For this reason, the incorporation of immigrant groups from India into the Sinhalese social structure as separate castes has been described by Ralph Pieris as a process of secularisation.

[47] Davy, 1821, p. 113; RCS in 1818; and Dharmaratna, 1890, p. 8, specifically naming Bentota, Induruwe, Panangoda, Paiyagala and Kittangoda as villages with Goyigama fishermen.

[48] See quotation from Lt Taylor, below, p. 54, n. 72.

[49] *Re* the Karāva, personal communications from Drs C. R. de Silva and D. A. Kotelawele (letter dated 16 July 1968). For the late Dutch period, however, this generalisation does not meet with Dr V. Kanapathypillai's favour.

The older and indigenous non-Goyigama castes, in this view, had dual functions: they were engaged in essential economic activity as well as essential rituals built upon 'the idea of service due to the "good people"', that is, to the dominant Goyigama caste. These interrelations were also marked by considerable institutional control over economic activity, with the monarchy and its Goyigama bureaucracy playing a pivotal regulating role. New migrant groups were simply assigned new economic duties. These duties had no ritual counterpart. Their occupational roles were of a purely secular nature.[50] This argument perhaps overstresses the canalising role of the monarchical state. It needs amplification by attention to the trends generated by the shift of the centres of Sinhalese population from the dry zone to the wet zone after the thirteenth century, and the new ecological opportunities created in the process. Thus modified it is possible to allow for the emergence of new economic activities that did not rely on state direction for inspiration. But once new occupational functions took root it is probable that these were interpreted in caste terms[51] and it is likely that the Sinhalese state stepped in to regulate the more lucrative branches in order to reap surpluses for itself. In pointing to this tendency and the absence of the ritual dimension (the 'sacrificial' in his terminology) in these new occupational arenas, Ralph Pieris's early essay contained several seminal notions.[52] His analysis also highlights the vulnerability of new migrants to the purposive directions of the state. As a further implication, it is arguable that in the late Kotte period (sixteenth century) as well as in the seventeenth century these migrant castes were in the process of integration and incorporation into the heterogeneous body of Sinhalese culture, but were not yet enmeshed fully within the caste system.

In the period of European colonial penetration, the Western rulers and society at large appear to have associated these three castes with the occupations in which a substantial number were

[50] Ralph Pieris, 1952, pp. 411–15; and 1956, pp. 180–7.

[51] Cf. the manner in which the introduction of the sewing machine in the Swat valley in the late nineteenth century led to the gradual emergence of the Sārkhamār, or tailoring caste, among the Swat Pathans (Barth, 1965, pp. 20–1).

[52] Dr Pieris also argues that occupational specialisation increased. In viewing occupations in rigidly caste-specific terms his argument has misleading implications and is contradicted by the evidence assembled within this book.

engaged (either originally or contemporaneously) and/or the services normally rendered to the government as *rājakāriya*: so that the Durāva were typically associated with toddy tapping, the Salāgama were typically associated with cinnamon peeling, and the Karāva were typically associated with fishing – sea fishing.

As with the Goyigama, these forms of classification should not be interpreted as evidence that these specific occupations were restricted to the respective castes, or that all the members of a caste engaged in the occupational livelihood with which they were typically associated. The KSD castes were involved in a wide range of occupations from an early date. For one thing, in several localities (but perhaps not all) the ruling powers relied on headmen or chieftains drawn from this caste to mediate their dealings with the dispersed coastal settlements of these castes. These caste headmen were used to mobilise the labour and services of the castes and to command the militia drawn from their ranks. As such, they were invested with authority and with the symbols of power, and were relieved of menial tasks. From the time of the Kotte kings, as Vāmadeva Kanapathypillai stresses, 'one of the privileges of the *Modliar* . . . was the command over the *lascorins* [*sic*] of his area and which formed the backbone of the native militia . . . used in times of war. It was this command over *lascorins* that added the weight of authority to the person of a *modliar*.'[53] These caste headmen, of course, were few in number – a tiny caste elite. The most important of their powers was connected with the implementation of *rājakāriya*, namely, the general personal service to the king (or ruling power) to which all adult males were liable. Under the colonial powers and within the Maritime Provinces *rājakāriya* was transformed into 'a fundamental organizing principle of social stratification'.[54] It created new social gradations among the KSD castes as well as the Goyigama, the Rajaka and most of the other castes. Though some castes had up to six or seven gradations and though there were regional variations and a wide variation in nomenclature, these intra-caste gradations can be regarded as variations on a basic three-tier structure: in order of status precedence, the *muda-*

[53] 1969, p. 232. Also Kotelawele, 1978, pp. 208–12.

[54] Peebles, 1973, p. 32; also pp. 30–46.

liyars, the *lascarins* and the labourers.[55] Some of the terms, such as 'lascoreen', 'nainde', and 'ooliyakkarea' (or 'sellakkarea'), were common to several castes. It is significant that the *lascarins* received status precedence over the others. This is an index to the military foundations of Western power and the importance of the wars that prevailed in Portuguese and Dutch times. Service as *lascarins* may have offered the opportunity for individual social mobility. This was particularly true in the period from 1560 to the 1650s when the Portuguese were engaged in more or less continuous warfare.

During this period, too, such Karāva as Kuruvita Rala (alias Antonio Barreto) and Don Fernando Samarakoon achieved considerable fame as military commanders or soldiering headmen.[56] As a military commander under the Portuguese, as Sinhalese rebel leader and as a refugee military leader in the Kandyan Kingdom who was rewarded with the post of 'Prince of Uva', the former attained considerable distinction and has emerged as a Karāva folk-hero in the twentieth century.[57] Don Manuel Dias D'Anderado, another Karāva headman, received symbols of honour and high position from the Dutch in recognition of his military and other services, and held the office of *Mudaliyar* of Negombo in the middle decades of the seventeenth century.[58]

More important than such individual cases was the occupational mobility relating to larger segments of a caste. It has been widely recognised in the scholarly literature on the history of the Maritime Provinces that the Portuguese, Dutch and early British rulers stretched and modified the *rājakāriya* system and caste services to serve their own purposes. What needs to be underlined here is the extent to which these measures led to occupational shifts among some of the castes. Several illustrations can be given. Thus, C. R. de Silva has found evidence that groups of Karāva, Batgama and one or two other castes were pressed into the cinnamon-peeling service by the Portuguese during the second quarter of the seventeenth century, while a

[55] *Ibid.* Also see RCS in 1818; and Sluiysken, 1784, in CO 54/124, Schedule XXI.

[56] Abeyasinghe, 1966, pp. 20, 50–1, 80–1, 116; C. R. de Silva, 1972; and Raghavan, 1961, pp. 36–7.

[57] Gustavus Jayewardene, 1966.

[58] *Memoirs of Van Goens 1663–1675*, 1932, pp. 8, 19, 20; and Raghavan, 1961, pp. 29n, 34, 52 and appendix III.

Goyigama *mudaliyar* could record that some Hinnā and Wahumpura people were among those commandeered by the Portuguese for the same purpose.[59] The Dutch Governor Maetsuyker's report in 1650 indicates that the Pannayō in Walallawita Korale in the Southern Province had been 'condemned' to supply cinnamon by a Sinhalese king on account of some misdemeanour, and continued to do so in the seventeenth century. He also reported that the work of transporting cinnamon bark fell on 'the low castes'.[60] Kotelawele notes that 'large numbers of "low castes" were utilised for a multiplicity of government services which were not strictly according to custom', an instance being the use of the Wahumpura caste for the construction of fortification works in Matara.[61] Again, in 1803, the British inducted 'all' the Batgama in their territories 'as Palanquin bearers during the Kandyan war' – a new service if we are to rely on the Goyigama *mudaliyar*, Abraham de Saram, and a change of some consequence because the Baṭgama people came to be described as palanquin bearers.[62] Again, in Galle District by the early nineteenth century, some segments of the Hunu caste as well as the Durāva caste were employed for toddy tapping; while 'baggage bearers' were drawn from virtually every caste: Rajaka, Karāva, Goyigama, Durāva, Ambättayō, etc.[63]

Such forcible channelling of some caste segments into new roles was not confined to the castes on the lowest rungs of the prevailing system of caste stratification. Thus, a segment of the Durāva caste had been channelled into 'the services of the Elephant department' since the early seventeenth century at

[59] Personal communication from Dr C. R. de Silva and Report of the Fourth Maha Mudaliyar (Christoffel de Saram), RCS in 1818, fol. 100. Also see C. R. de Silva, 1975, p. 109, and Kotelawele, 1968, p. 201.

[60] *Memoir of Joan Maetsuyker, 1650*, 1927, pp. 10–11.

[61] Kotelawele, 1968, pp. 304–5.

[62] [Abraham] de Saram, 1906, p. 6. This association was *not* noted by early observers: Knox could find no service attached to this caste and in the *Janavamsa* they are referred to as hired workers and agricultural labourers (Knox, 1911, p. 110; Nevill, 'Jana-Wansa', 1886, p. 93). They appear to have been jacks-of-all-outdoor-trades. Their lowly position is clear. Cordiner (1807, p. 93) and Denham (1912, p. 192) associated them with palanquin bearing. It is interesting, therefore, that their own traditions today should emphasise their role as palanquin bearers to royalty and other officials (Ryan, 1953, pp. 127–8).

[63] Smyth's Report, RCS in 1818, fols. 85–6.

the very least, while the Karāva in the Matara Dissavany were used by the Dutch to transport the government stocks of paddy.[64] Reimers notes that in the eighteenth century, 'Fishers, or Carreas [had to] supply fish daily for the Governor's table and help to navigate ships, make triumphal arches, recover lost anchors, etc.'[65] In the same period it is evident that the Dutch assigned the Karāva of Negombo and Kalutara 'to the duty of loading and unloading vessels' and those of Moratuwa and Panadura to the carpenters' and cartwrights' establishment; while in several localities their *rājakāriya* was the provision of maritime or river transport services, and yet other segments of the caste were expected to ornament resthouses whenever necessary.[66] Another source described the services of the Karāva in Dutch times as that of masons, carpenters, boatmen, caulkers and suppliers of limestone.[67] Among the Karāva, it is clear, some of these extensions of caste duties were related to their residential location along the strand and the skills (including woodwork) which they had acquired as fishermen.

Such occupational shifts induced from above were complemented by those arising from the needs of survival and the results of individual enterprise. Thus, in 1799, the residents of Kollupitiya village wrote that 'in the bad monsoon the Fishermen of most places draw Toddy, and in the Good Monsoon the greatest part of the Toddy Drawers, Fish'.[68] By the early nineteenth century, at the very least, it was possible for observers to note that the Durāva 'follow[ed] every trade they [found] convenient or profitable'; and that the Karāva did not confine themselves to fishing, but followed 'the occupation of agriculture wherever the soil was favourable'; also that, 'whenever trade [was carried on], they could be found engaged in commercial pursuits, as well as other people'.[69] Among the occupations taken up by the Salāgama from Portuguese times was the husking of coconuts for the preparation of coir; and in the late 1820s, Colebrooke reported that the Salāgama were also

[64] [Abraham] de Saram, 1906, p. 4; *Memoir of Loten, 1767*, 1935, p. 29; and Kotelawele, 1968, p. 194.

[65] Reimers (ed.), 1950, p. iii.

[66] RCS in 1818, especially fols. 62, 72, 95, 77–9, 88. Also see P. E. Pieris, 1918, p. 730.

[67] Sluiysken, 1784, in CO 54/124, Schedule XXI. Also see Karāva Petition, 1830, encl. in CO 54/131.

[68] Quoted in Peebles, 1973, p. 62.

[69] [Abraham] de Saram, 1906, pp. 3–4.

'landholders, fishermen, mechanics, weavers and labourers'.[70] Their *rājakāriya* remained that of cinnamon peeling, though additional labourers from other castes were 'sometimes employed' in this work. Two headmen in the Colombo District captured the interweaving of change within a framework of continuity in their report to the Colebrooke–Cameron Commission: 'Men are bound by caste by tenure and by custom. A man is bound to service by custom when he has employed himself for a length of time in some occupation different from that of his caste and in that case he is no longer called out to perform the service of his caste.'[71]

However, occupation was not neutral in meaning, either for the Sinhalese or for the ruling powers. Stigma attached to certain occupations, while other occupations carried prestige. A more comprehensive analysis of source material from the late Dutch and early British periods is needed before one can work out the occupational prestige rankings in a rough way. For the moment, two items of evidence collected by the Colebrooke–Cameron Commission must suffice, one from a British district officer in the Four Korales (the northern part of Kegalle District) in the Kandyan border country, and the latter from a body of Low-Country *mudaliyars*:

Agriculture is not confined to any particular Caste, but the manufactures are to the low Caste People, it would be a degradation for a high Caste person to employ himself in any. The latter occasionally take Salt and Tobacco into other Districts to exchange for Buffaloes and Cotton.[72]

Mechanised trade [i.e. carpentry, goldsmith work, etc.] is not Confined to Caste alone. Any trade which does not attach disgrace is practised by other Castes also, but it is by those who belong to the Caste that it is Carried as a regular trade, and Could not refuse to work in that line when called upon to do it.[73]

[70] Abeyasinghe, n.d., p. 74; *Memoir of Becker, 1716*, 1914, p. 30; see below, p. 63, nn. 106, 107; and G. C. Mendis, (ed.), 1956, pp. 25, 90.

[71] Evidence of the 2nd Modeliar of the Attepattoo and of the 3rd Mohotty Mohandiram, Native Headmen attached to the Collector of Colombo, in CO 416/4, n. 16.

[72] Answer . . . from Lt Taylor [at Fort King in the Four Korales] in CO 416/2, A. 8, 231.

[73] Replies of the Principal Mudaliyars and Landholders in Colombo and adjoining districts . . . , 12 December 1829 in CO 416/2, A. 6.

Some occupations, evidently, were more neutral and less demeaning. And there was regional variation in the evaluations, with the Kandyan regions revealing greater conservatism in this regard. To these variations were added those of situational definition and interpretation.[74]

Again, despite the diversification in occupations within some castes, it appears to have been a general practice for a specific caste to be associated with a specific occupation. In those junctions of Asian society which displayed polyglot characteristics and where several cultural groups intermingled, it would appear that simple classificatory terms were essential: in certain contexts, the categories 'Hindu', 'Muslim' or 'Buddhist' or 'Christian' would be applied; in others, it would be 'Tamil', 'Sinhalese', 'Malayali', 'Chinese' and so on; in yet others, caste terminology would come into play. Hence the manner in which the Sinhalese word '*jātiya*' can refer to 'race', 'people (nation)', 'caste' or 'sub-caste', varying its meaning according to context. In the context of caste interaction, since a shorthand reference map seems to have been in demand, and since the tendency was to rely on stereotypes, the linkage of caste and occupation seems to have been found convenient. As the author of the *Janavamsa* recognised: 'a name [a caste designation] comes into usage from an employment'.[75]

The occupational label that was attached to a caste seems to have been derived from historical memories pertaining to the original occupation of each caste, though it may also have arisen from the contemporaneous occupation of the majority within each caste. In his report on caste services in 1832, it is significant that Abraham de Saram refers at several points to 'the natural trade' or 'the natural occupation' or 'the original occupation' of a particular caste.[76] There might be room to debate whether these memories of original roles were always correct. But where a large number or a majority of people from a particular caste was actually engaged in the classificatory occupation, this form of classification tended to take root. Once rooted, it was, so to speak, a historical force.

This was particularly so in the Maritime Provinces because the European officials found it easier to 'place' the caste

[74] See above, pp. 37, 41, and below, 196.

[75] Nevill, 1886, p. 81. Also see G. C. Mendis (ed.), 1956, p. 25.

[76] 1906, pp. 3–6.

communities in their role framework in this manner. Thus, Portuguese officials and writers constantly refer to 'the Careas or Pescadores', and Europeans in subsequent decades spoke of the 'Chandoos or toddy tappers', 'Hoeno or chunam burners' and so on. It was a natural step to drop one or the other term, and the Europeans often found it more convenient to use the occupational description. In the case of the Karāva, the term 'Pescadores' came to be employed widely as a synonym and passed down to the British classificatory system as 'Fishers'. One has reason to suspect that the Goyigama *mudaliyars* were party to this process. In this particular case the terminological shift was in their interest. Since the time of the Anuradhapura kings, there had been in Lanka a few people who made their living by inland fishing along the rivers, river mouths and lagoons near the coast or in the large tanks in the dry zone. They were, it appears, treated as a caste and referred to as 'Kevaṭṭa' or 'Kevul'.[77] Their occupation was considered demeaning and they were on the lowest levels of the caste hierarchy. Once the emigrant Karāva settlers were classified as 'Fisher', however, it was possible to bring these two separate communities under one classificatory term.[78] This simple step carried considerable meaning. It was a sharp instrument against the social advances of a Karāva elite in Portuguese and Dutch times; and so too in British times. Once the two communities were treated as one caste, in English as 'Fishers', it was possible for Sinhalese-speakers to use the vernacular terms 'Karāva' and 'Kevullo' in synonymous fashion. The latter term was not merely derogatory, but carried damning status implications. One can sympathise with the chagrin of Karāva spokesmen in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries when confronted by these words and these classificatory lists. This was, perhaps, a case of attempted murder by classification.[79] It was not less effective

[77] W. I. Siriweera, Economic conditions of Ceylon (c. 1070–1344 A.D.), unpublished Ph.D. thesis, London University, pp. 26, 29.

[78] Thus, see the caste lists provided by Valentyn (1726), Christoffel de Saram (1818) and Abraham de Saram (1832). These can be located respectively in Ryan, 1953, pp. 65–72; RCS in 1818; de Saram 1906. Valentyn's work has recently been translated and edited by S. Arasaratnam (*François Valentyn's Description of Ceylon*, London: Hakluyt Society, 1978), unfortunately too late for this book to benefit from it.

[79] See especially Raghavan, 1961, pp. 40–1. It was surely no accident that the report presented to Governor Wilmot Horton by the *Maha Mudaliyar*, Abraham de Saram,

because a lineage of European powers and an even longer list of scholars have been more or less innocent parties to this case of attempted homicide.

This argument should *not* be taken as evidence in support of the view that the original occupation of the majority of Karāva was *not* that of fishing. Though the evidence that has been brought to light on the occupational structure of the Kotte Kingdom and Portuguese Kotte in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries does not permit a definitive conclusion, nevertheless it points in the same direction and suggests that the Karāva were largely engaged in the sea-fishing trade, while supplementing their income from other sources. It is established that a number of Karāva in Portuguese times were engaged in fishing and that these men paid their dues in cash, in dried fish or with part of their catch.[80] In the early nineteenth century most Sinhalese fishermen seem to have been Karāva: thus one headman reported that 'about one-tenth of the persons engaged in fishing at Colombo [were] not of the fisher caste'.[81] Today, according to Bryce Ryan's survey, the residents at the water's edge on the coastal strip from Negombo to Tangalle are largely Karāva; and the opinions of several

in January 1832 should be reprinted in 1888, 1889, 1895 and 1906 (Goonetileke, 1970, vol. 2, pp. 516–17). The latter dates lie within the period of acute caste polemics (see below pp. 159–65). These circumstances explain the extreme annoyance among Karāva patriots when the term 'Fisher' is used by scholars today (e.g. A. K. Coomaraswamy, B. H. Farmer, Tikiri Abeyasinghe). The Kshātriya Association even complained to the Wimalaratne Commission in the 1970s on this issue. Among those subject to attack were Kenneth David and myself for our writings (1968 and 1969 respectively). At the stage at which my earlier paper on the Karāva was written I had not reached the conclusions presented above. Nevertheless, that paper never used the term 'Fisher' and always employed the label 'Karāva'. The principal source of annoyance appears to have been the phrase 'typically associated with fishing' used within parentheses at one point. Its meaning has been misunderstood. This statement does not represent my opinion or even argue the correctness of such an opinion; it is a generalisation about the way in which many Sinhalese and many colonial administrators have tended to describe the Karāva. In the framework of description provided in this book I would not hesitate to use it again, just as I would say of the Goyigama that they were (and are) 'typically associated with paddy cultivation'. For some viewpoints from Karāva patriots, see *The Searchlight*, 30 April 1970, pp. 2–3; 31 March 1966; and 31 May 1966.

80 Personal communication from Dr C. R. de Silva. Also see Edmund Peiris, 1952, pp. 58–9; P. E. Pieris 1949, pp. 2, 7, 27, 39, 73; and C. R. de Silva, 1975, pp. 112–13.

81 Evidence of B. Manuel Perera, Fisher Renter of Colombo in CO 416/9/068 (data supplied by Dr Patrick Peebles).

knowledgeable scholars leave no doubt that the majority of fishermen are Karāva.[82]

These conclusions must not, as I have warned earlier, be stretched further to maintain that all Sinhalese fishermen were Karāva, or that all Karāva were fishermen. Such was not the case. The Portuguese *tombo* of 1614 refers to a Salāgama who owned a fishing net; and we have already seen that there were Durāva and Salāgama fishermen in the early nineteenth century.[83] The significance of this distinction does not seem to have been lost on the fishermen ofGalkissa in the early nineteenth century: Galkissa was a village south of Colombo which is known to have had both Karāva and Durāva fishermen; when they presented two petitions on the subject of fish rents in October 1832, therefore, one was signed by 'the undersigned Fishers of Galkisse' and the other by 'the undersigned who carry on the occupation of Fishing at Galkisse'.[84] In this book, therefore, the term 'fishermen' will not be used with caste-specific connotations and will refer to an occupational role, while the 'Careas' of Kotte and Portuguese times, and their descendants in the Sinhalese districts, will be described as 'Karāva'.

Intracaste differentiation The historical information on internal differentiation within the Sinhalese castes seems to be limited and the subject of the sub-castes has yet to receive a definitive study. Within these limitations, the evidence suggests yet more differences in the morphology of Sinhalese castes in comparison with that of, say, southern India.[85] Only a few castes appear to have had sub-castes. Even in these instances, not all sub-castes were endogamous, several sub-castes could be found in the same locality and the sub-castes could even be isogamous in status. In these circumstances internal status

[82] 1953, pp. 104, 106, 111; Tambiah, 1963, p. 69; Evers, 1964, p. 135; and Alexander, 1975, p. 335; also Yalman, 1967, p. 272.

[83] Personal communication from Dr C. R. de Silva; see above, pp. 53–4; and encl. in Horton to Stanley, no. 43, 9 October 1833, CO 54/131, fol. 449.

[84] Enclosures in Horton to Stanley, *ibid.*, fols. 434–5, 438–9. The fishermen, 'chiefly boat owners', assembled in two different groups on 26 and 27 October 1832. There is no indication whether the two groups correlated with the two castes, but this is probable. Also see Dharmaratna, 1890, p. 8.

[85] This choice is influenced by the discussion that follows in chap. 7.

gradations between family clusters of the *peläntiya* type (kin-based status groups) seem to have been the most significant form of intracaste differentiation. In the Low-Country Sinhalese districts it is likely that these status gradations were powerfully influenced from the sixteenth century by the organising categories of the successive colonial powers as they deployed the *rājakāriya* system.

The Goyigama, Salāgama and, possibly, the Navandanna appear to have been the only Sinhalese castes with distinct sub-castes. Among the Goyigama these were of the *variga* type described by Leach for the North Central Province or that described by Obeyesekere for Hinidum Pattu in the Southern Province.[86] Significantly, the latter district included isogamous sub-castes. In their turn such Goyigama sub-castes fell into several broad divisions (e.g. *radala*, *mudali*, *paṭṭi*) with a nomenclature that developed variations as between the Kandyan and Low-Country Sinhalese districts.[87]

Among the Salāgama, the endogamous sub-castes were congruent with the colonial governments' organising categories – an index to the high degree of institutionalisation to which this caste was subject by the kings of Kotte and the colonial powers as a result of the importance attached to cinnamon. Initially, there were four sub-castes: *panividakārayō* (messengers); *hēvāpanna* or *hēvāyō* (*lascarins*) *kuruňdukārayō* (cinnamon peelers) and *ūliyakkārāyō* (coolies). But during the course of the British period the smaller sub-castes were absorbed by the larger two and the two-fold division between the *hēvāpanna* and *kuruňdukāra* has persisted into the mid-twentieth century.[88]

The Navandanna present a problematic case. The *Janavamsa* depicts two great sub-divisions: the *ācari* or metal-workers; and the *vaduvō* or wood- and stone-workers. And eighteenth- and nineteenth-century observers list several occupational categories. Yet Knox does not refer to such sub-divisions and there is no evidence of division today. Therefore, Ryan suggests that these divisions 'were more like guilds than castes'.[89]

[86] Leach, 1961a, pp. 23–7, 67–89; and Obeyesekere, 1967, pp. 15–16 and *passim*.
[87] Obeyesekere, 1967, pp. 15–16; Ralph Pieris, 1956, pp. 171–3; and Ryan, 1953, pp. 67–71, 93–103.
[88] Malalgoda, 1976, p. 152n; Koorundu, 1833; and Ryan, 1953, pp. 52, 107–10.
[89] Nevill, 1886, pp. 78–81; and Ryan, 1953, pp. 112–13.

It should be emphasised that these sub-castes were not restricted to specific territories in the south Indian pattern of one sub-caste (caste) per locality. Thus, the four Salāgama sub-castes residing in the sub-districts north of the Kelani Ganga (river) were organised into a department called the *Sulubadda*[90] under a headman who represented them in their dealings with the principal Goyigama headmen or the state.

Among the other Sinhalese castes there does not appear to have been clear differentiation into endogamous sub-castes. With a minor proviso, this applies to the Karāva as well. Though some Dutch and British observers list internal divisions, these must be seen as a product of the tendency among the colonial authorities and the headmen under them to classify people according to their occupational differences. Thus, in the early nineteenth century the two de Sarams, both Goyigama *mudaliyars*, divided the Karāva into nine 'classes':[91]

1 *oru* Karāva (boat fishers)
2 *madäl* Karāva (beach seine Karāva)
3 *dandu* Karāva (rod fishers)
4 *kespe* Karāva (turtle fishers)
5 *barudäl* Karāva (barudäl net fishers)
6 *porovakāra* Karāva (axe fishers or timber-felling fishers)
7 *goda* Kevulō (land fishers who catch fish standing on rocks without going into the water)
8 *tok* Kevulō (*tok* [shore net] fishers who go boating in their canoes as they go to fish)
9 *indimal* Kevulō (date flower fishers who ornament their wedding houses with the flower of the date tree)

Christoffel de Saram also noted that these last four 'classes' were 'despised by the others'. This last statement is correct. But, insofar as this list is taken to be a list of sub-castes, Peebles is probably correct in calling it 'a spurious classification'.[92] For one thing, it is doubtful whether the Karāva regarded the inland fishermen (encompassed by the latter three categories) as members of their caste. We have suggested earlier that their classification in this manner was part of a Goyigama strategy to

[90] Abeyasinghe, 1966, pp. 137–8; cf. Colvin R. de Silva, 1962, pp. 388–91.
[91] [Abraham] de Saram, 1906; and Report of the Fourth Maha Mudaliyar [Christoffel de Saram] in RCS in 1818 in CO 54/71, fols. 91–104.
[92] 1973, p. 72.

degrade the Karāva. Secondly, in these same reports the de Sarams list other divisions among the Karāva according to 'their duties to Government'. These divisions are termed *pēr-uva*', translated as 'departments'.[93] With the significant exception of the Karāva Porovakāra, these divisions are not congruent with the list above and refer to occupational services such as those associated with carpenters, caulkers, sawyers, labourers and those with transport duties on sea or river. Out of all these distinctions the only one that survived into the mid-twentieth century was that of the Karāva Porovakāra, who reside in a cluster of hamlets in the hinterland of Kalutara District.[94] As a numerically minute and isolated pocket of people, rather similar in morphological features to the Goyigama outcaste known as Demala Gattara, the Karāva Porovakāra do not undermine the generalisation that the Karāva lacked endogamous and localised sub-castes.

However, the Karāva may have been internally differentiated into selectively differentiated kin groups, such as the *pelāntiya* identified among the Goyigama by Obeyesekere and the *pavula* described by Yalman.[95] This involved status gradations among family clusters. It is possible that these finely grained evaluations of prestige were influenced by such factors as occupation and the forms of specialisation within the fishing industry. For instance, for several decades the beach seine fishermen of Gahavälla have considered themselves superior to the deep sea and lagoon fishermen of the adjoining hamlet of Kottetawa and the neighbouring village of Kudavällakälē.[96] But occupations could be changed, or could suddenly turn into lucrative professions because of external factors. Therefore, such gradations among *pelāntiya* or similar family phalanxes

[93] [Abraham] de Saram, 1906, p. 3. Note that the term *pēruva* was used to refer to some of the Goyigama sub-castes (Ralph Pieris, 1956, p. 172). Its meaning here, in de Saram's report, is probably that of the generic term 'kind' or 'category'.

[94] Ryan, 1953, p. 105.

[95] Alexander, 1973, p. 45 and *passim*; Yalman, 1967, chap. 9; and Obeyesekere, 1967, chap. 9. On the basis of evidence in Raghavan's book, Obeyesekere suggests that *vāsagama* were probably of no sociological significance among the Karāva (p. 17), but this is contradicted by Alexander's information (1973, chap. 5).

[96] Alexander, 1973, pp. 23–5. But note that the Gahavälla people themselves had adopted beach seining only about the 1870s. Cf. too, the lower status attributed to beach-seining fishermen *vis-à-vis* deep sea fishermen by the de Sarams.

were liable to alter. Moreover, hypergamous marriage strategies were widely pursued among the Karāva (and among the Sinhalese in general). In combination with the spatial mobility which the Karāva revealed from pre-British times,[97] and the genealogical manipulations which most Sinhalese were ready to deploy when convenience so demanded,[98] it is likely that these hypergamous marriage alliances tended to penetrate the status distinctions and to continually reconstitute the gradational structure over the long run.[99]

Caste stratification in the Low-Country Sinhalese districts, 1500s–1820s

Once they had established themselves in the Sinhalese districts, the immigrant Karāva people must have found that the involvement of a substantial number of their members in offshore and deep sea fishing was disadvantageous for their caste status, and in considerable measure, therefore, for their social status. In many parts of southern Asia, fishing has been treated as a lowly occupation. Along the Indian coast most of the castes engaged in fishing were accorded a low ritual position; and it is not surprising that the Portuguese found that the 'Careas' resident on the Coromandel coast were 'a low caste of these parts'.[100] In Sri Lanka and other Buddhist countries, these assessments were reinforced by Buddhist norms. Medieval Thai texts include fishing among the meanest of tasks.[101] It is only too clear that the catching of fish was contrary to Buddhist notions of 'the good life'. In the *Hatthavanagallavihāravamsa*, a mid-thirteenth-century Sinhalese work, the entreaty of the wayfarer who addresses King Srisanghabodhi reveals the prevalence of this norm: 'I am not of low birth. I am not a fisherman, nor am I a hunter making a living by destroying life.

97 See below, p. 85.

98 Leach, 1961a, pp. 72ff, 307–9; and Obeyesekere, 1967, pp. 224ff.

99 Obeyesekere, 1967, chap. 9; Yalman, 1967, pp. 77, 140–9, 150–1, 158–9, 172ff; Alexander, 1973, *passim*; and Roberts, 1974a, pp. 567–9.

100 Letter from Henrique Henriques to the General (of the Jesuits), from Manukkudi, 13 January 1558, in *Documenta Indica*, vol. III, pp. 34–5. Citation from Dr C. R. de Silva.

101 Evers, 1964, p. 134. Also the *Anguttāra-Nikāya* as in H. Glasenapp, *Der Pfad der*

104 Personal communication from Dr C. R. de Silva. See British Library, OR 6606:126

On the other hand I am born into a family worthy of being associated with by the high castes.'[102] Indeed, the *Janavamsa* specifically attributed a low status to the Karāva because they sinned in the taking of life without mercy.[103] Much later, in the seventeenth century, the Kandyan aristocracy, the standard-bearers of Sinhalese culture, evidently regarded the Karāva as 'low' in status; while a Sinhalese panegyric in praise of the Kandyan King Senarat directed slighting attacks against Kuruvita Rala on the basis of his caste background and used the derogatory caste epithet '*Kevulā*'.[104]

The Salāgama too were 'a despised people' in the mid-seventeenth century and Van Goens had this to say of several non-Goyigama castes: 'As the condition of the lower castes of the Sinhalese is so miserable, particularly of the Coolies, Paneas, Chalias, Rodias, Carrias, Paleas, or Washermen, who are liable to perform service, and similar people, it can easily be presumed that they employ every trick and artifice to escape their servitudes.'[105] Nor did the occupational shifts and part-time employments of the KSD castes always assist their social prestige. One of the alternative means of employment adopted by the residents along the strand, particularly in the southern areas, was that of coir and copra production. The Salāgama and Karāva appear to have taken to these trades.[106] It is therefore significant that in the 1790s British officials were confronted with a 'prejudice' against employment in the manufacture of coir because it was associated with 'a low caste of people'.[107] In the Kandyan country, the lowly position of the isolated and tiny Salāgama communities was left in no doubt in the early part of the nineteenth century (and hence, before this century as well). John Davy found that 'the men of this caste

[102] A. Liyanagamage, *The Decline of Polonnaruwa and the Rise of Dambadeniya, (circa 1180–1270 A.D.)*, Colombo: Government Press for the Department of Cultural Affairs, 1968, p. 18.

[103] Nevill, 1886, pp. 88–9. Cf. too, the *vacanas* (concise preachings of Virasaiva saints) cited in McCormack, 1958, p. 329.

[104] Personal communication from Dr C. R. de Silva. See British Library, OR 6606:126 and 6611:55, and C. R. de Silva, 1972, pp. 25–31 esp. p. 28.

[105] *Memoir of Joan Maetsuyker, 1650*, 1927, p. 10; and *Memoirs of Van Goens 1663–1675*, 1932, p. 20.

[106] Abeyasinghe, n.d., p. 74: *Memoir of Becker, 1716*, 1914, p. 26; Ameer Ali, 1970; and Ryan, 1953, p. 262.

[107] Upali C. Wickremeratne, 1964, p. 147.

were not allowed to wear caps, or cloths reaching much below the knees, and the dress of the women was similar to that of the potters'.[108] A few years earlier, in 1812, John D'Oyly reported that the Wahumpura, Durāva and Salāgama castes in the Kandyan Kingdom could not grow beards nor wear *ohori* (cloths worn by women above the waist and thrown backwards over the shoulder), though they were permitted a *koṇḍē*.[109] It is not known in what ways the customary rules of etiquette operated to mark out the low status of the Salāgama in the Low-Country. Evidence is yet to come out on this point, though one gets a generalised picture of the 'debasement' of the Salāgama in the early nineteenth century from the pro-Salāgama essay of a British resident writing under the pseudonym 'Koorundu'.[110] According to this observer, the 'native aristocrats' (presumably the Goyigama *mudaliyars*) were an instrumental force in maintaining the Salāgama in a downtrodden condition.

The Durāva and Karāva, too, were subject to sumptuary regulations and *rājakāriya* duties which conveyed a measure of inferiority. In the early eighteenth century, Valentyn noted that the Durāva wore a bell at their waist when working at their trade up among the coconut trees so as to warn passers-by.[111] In the Matara District in the early nineteenth century all Karāva 'except Headmen and their Sons [were] obliged to carry Chools' (i.e. torches made from coconut leaves); in Wellaboda Pattu within this district, the Karāva of 'Baddeturas' (servant to a headman) rank were expected to supply fish for the table of the *dissāva* (the leading Dutch officer), while one 'Baddetura' was specifically assigned the task of supplying fish for the *mudaliyar* (presumably a Goyigama chief); and in 'Belligam Tottomony', the Karāva were obliged to remove the dirt from the inside of the resthouse and sprinkle white sand therein.[112] According to a regulation (new?) enacted in 1809 the Karāva (in certain localities?) were forbidden 'the use' of 'some particular Garments' because they were thought 'not worthy' of such

108 Davy, 1821, p. 126.
109 Diary of John D'Oyly, 1917, dated 16 June 1812. A 'konde' refers to a hairstyle where the hair is curled up at the back of the head in a bun.
110 Koorundu, 1883, p. 281.
111 Ryan, 1953, p. 77.
112 Forbes Report in RCS in 1818, CO 54/71.

apparel. In raising this subject as one of their grievances in 1830, a petition from the Karāva of seven coastal 'stations' also referred to the 'disgraces unbecoming to their respective orders and Ranks, [the] Hardships and austerities of the unusual duties which they have been pressed to perform and various other inconveniences which they have since undergone ... [all] of such a nature, incapable of being described by words'.[113] On these grounds, therefore, it can be suggested that the Karāva had a relatively low caste status in the late Kotte period, that is, in the sixteenth century; and that this heritage continued to weigh against them, or be brought to weigh against them, in subsequent centuries. This suggestion assumes that the KSD castes had been integrated into the Sinhalese caste structure by the sixteenth century and is a point of view that has been brought into question by Patrick Peebles. In a subsidiary statement within a seminal reinterpretation of the political economy of the Low-Country Sinhalese districts in Portuguese and Dutch times,[114] Peebles lays emphasis on the existence of territorially separate coastal domains within which the Karāva, or Salāgama or Durāva *mudaliyars* were the big men: 'in the coastal districts where few *goyigamas* lived, the *karāva*, *durāva*, and *salāgama* castes were not merely "respectable", but dominant. In these territories they were not subordinate to any *goyigamas*.' For this reason, and because *rājakāriya* divided the Sinhalese into categories that cut across caste lines', he argues that it is not possible 'to derive a unitary Sinhalese caste hierarchy'.[115]

This interpretation does not take adequate note of the degree to which the Karāva, Salāgama and Durāva were intermingled in coastal localities. It also makes too much of the territorial separation of these castes from other castes, including the Goyigama. The widespread distribution of the Goyigama to which reference has been made earlier meant that there were (are) Goyigama hamlets in the immediate hinterland within walking distance of the coast. In their trading and cinnamon-peeling activities, their attempts to acquire land for agriculture (say, as sharecroppers), their visits to the temple and their pilgrimages, the KSD castes would have been involved in

[113] Karāva Petition, 1830: in CO 54/131, fols. 472–5.

[114] 1973, chap. 2 esp. pp. 59–74.

[115] *Ibid.*, pp. 59–65 esp. 60, 65.

extra-locality movements which brought them into contact with the Goyigama and other castes.

In their transactions with all other castes the KSD castes must have been only too conscious of the manner in which these castes regarded their 'original' or 'natural' occupations. In a context in which Buddhist ethics intermingled with the concepts of purity and pollution, the Durāva and Karāva would have found these assessments especially problematic. The KSD castes must have been equally aware of the overt marks of low status to which they were subject,[116] the contrasting social privileges enjoyed by the Goyigama aristocracy, the institutionally supported claims to status superiority enjoyed by the Goyigama as a whole and the fact that there were no ritual occasions during which any Goyigama were subordinate to any one of them. They were part of, or becoming part of, a structure of discrimination. They were themselves far from hesitant in imposing these discriminations against such non-Goyigama castes as the Oli, Beravā, Hunu and Hinnā.[117]

In such circumstances it is a mistake to apply the concept of 'dominance' to any one of the KSD castes in a specific locality. Even the use of Srinivas' rather more nebulous concept of 'shared dominance' would be misleading, because the KSD were continually engaged in conflicts among themselves for status and power. Physical proximity and hierarchical values which emphasised the overriding importance of status, therefore, involved members of the KSD castes, often under the leadership of their headmen or other notables, in the dialectics of status aspiration, caste advancement and caste competition. While these features will be amplified further in the course of the book, the petition from the Karāva in 1830 which has been quoted a few pages previously supplies a significant example of this dialectic: it is marked by a tendency to compare the position of the Karāva with that of the Goyigama and the Salāgama.[118]

For these reasons the Goyigama served as a point of reference

[116] For illustrations, see above, pp. 63–5 and below, pp. 69–72. Ryan observed that in some villages the Durāva still adhered to the 'old etiquette of seating' in their relations with the Goyigama (1953, p. 265).

[117] Kannangara, 1966, pp. 209–10, 243–44; and G. C. Mendis (ed.), 1956, vol. 1, pp. 48–9.

[118] See above, pp. 64–5; and also Malalgoda, 1976, pp. 147–8.

and assumed a central evaluative role in the structure of caste interaction in the Low-Country Sinhalese districts. This was at its strongest within the agricultural areas in the hinterland, where the Goyigama were at the centre of a network of patron–client exchanges involving dyadic transactions between themselves and a number of service castes. While the KSD castes were not part of this network of ritual exchanges, their tendency to compare themselves with the Goyigama meant that the latter functioned as an apical pivot in the secular field as well. This was, in part, a consequence of their demographic strength and strategic role in the Sinhalese and colonial states. Their powerful function in this manner was only too evident in the social rivalries and caste polemics of the nineteenth century: the non-Goyigama caste spokesmen invariably compared themselves with the Goyigama and directed their polemical fire at them.[119] So that, here, the Goyigama were a negative reference group. And down to the present day the life-style and the patrimonial role of aristocratic Goyigama landlords have served as the emulative standards for aspirant families in the countryside, whether merchants or agriculturists.[120] Thus, they also served as a reference group of imitation. In pre-British times such an apical reference role functioned as an interlinking element as well as an evaluative mechanism in the structure of caste. The social distance of castes A and B in their respective caste transactions with Goyigama in the same locality would be used as a means of evaluating the relative status of A and B, and would be so used by the Goyigama and interested observers as well as A and B.[121] Such a measuring device was inherently imprecise and prone to generate obscurity. It nevertheless tended to bring all the castes within the ambit of a single framework and to uphold the principle of a hierarchy.

Nor were the Goyigama the only common denominator. It is of some significance that the Rajaka (washermen) and Beravā (drummers) served a number of castes in the upper brackets of

[119] See below, pp. 159–65.

[120] Obeyesekere, 1967, pp. 244–57, 236–7; and Roberts, 1975b, pp. 46–51. For some elaboration, see below, pp. 222–4.

[121] Cf. 'But as between the various "low" castes in Terutenne, there was no agreement on ritual status. Being entirely separate communities, each one considered itself to be "better" than the others' (Yalman, 1961, p. 103).

the Sinhalese caste system, among them the Karāva and the Durāva. Here then were other linking elements. Likewise, the Palī washed for most of the other castes. Only the Salāgama, served exclusively by the Hinnā, remained outside these two clusters of washermen networks.

It is my contention, therefore, that as the K S D castes moved towards integration into the Sinhalese fold (and this was, as indicated earlier, a hesitant move at the start) they confronted the status and power of the Goyigama and were brought within the ambit of a hierarchical order.

It was a hierarchical order and a structure of discrimination that was upheld by the kings of Kotte. The Western colonial powers were heirs to this role. With the possible exception of the Portuguese, they perpetuated this system till the early nineteenth century. It has been commonly held that the Portuguese did not disrupt the prevailing economic and social systems; and evidence from such writers as Queyroz and Ribeiro has been cited as testimony to their perpetuation of caste services and caste symbolism.[122] But the Portuguese officials were prone to violate or ignore custom.[123] And their period of rule (from the 1590s to 1658) was punctuated by warfare and disorder. One suspects that such circumstances opened prestigious and symbolic doors for a few non-Goyigama individuals and families. In contrast, the Dutch committed themselves to an ordered administration in which the existing customs were to be maintained with scrupulous care – though they were ready to bend custom occasionally in favour of the Salāgama who collected their principal export product.[124] The compilation of lists of caste precedence was part of this process of ordering. Affording preferential treatment to the high status Goyigama families (*mudaliyars*, new and old, and their relatives) was part of their respect for custom. Rightly or wrongly, the Dutch, and the British after them, viewed the Sinhalese caste system in terms of a single hierarchy. Once rooted, such a perspective must have acted as a centripetal and unifying force. It carried normative power.

[122] Ryan, 1953, pp. 51–4, 77; also Abeyasinghe, 1966, p. 68; and C. R. de Silva, 1972, p. 251n.

[123] Abeyasinghe, 1966, p. 226; and Queyroz, 1930, pp. 1009–19.

[124] Personal communication from Dr V. Kanapathypillai (January 1977).

The occasions during which this hierarchical model came into play were the officially sponsored ceremonies or gatherings. These were not always restricted to the central spots, to Galle, Colombo or Matara. They could occur during a levee *en masse* or during a high official's tour. At some of these gatherings carefully regulated protocol was a characteristic feature. The protocol applied particularly to the leaders of the different castes, that is, to the *mudaliyars* and other headmen in the Maritime Provinces. The protocol concerned itself in minute detail with the various symbols of status – with the form of dress and the accoutrements that each headman should have, with the retinue and so on.

These symbols of status did not merely embody the aspirations of elite families in competition with each other. The caste headmen were the representatives of their caste, and the symbols thereof. Thus, in 1663 the Dutch Governor, Van Goens, insisted that the Adigar of Bentota, one Don Constantyn who was probably of Goyigama caste, should 'always be honoured above the Mudaliyar of Negombo, Louys and Manuel D'Andrado' (the D'Anderados being Karāva), because the former was of 'high descent'.[125] Such distinctions did not carry meanings that were restricted to individual and familial precedence. The 'leading lights' of a caste or community were community figures. Where they stood in the retinue (*pirivara*) that trailed behind that great god, the head of state or the king, symbolised to the Sinhalese world the rank status of each community. It is significant that the official description of the dress of native headmen drawn up by the British in the 1810s (see chart) had a rough caste ranking classification (though the Salāgama headmen are conspicuous by their absence). This did *not* mean that the highest ranking headman in caste category (2) had to display symbols which placed him below the lowest rank in caste category (1), but that the highest in caste (2) ranked below the highest in (1). For the world at large, and for the participants, it was significant that the 'Modeliars and Mahavidahn Modeliars' of the Karāva and Durāva castes could

[125] *Memoirs of Van Goens, 1663–1675*, 1932, p. 19. The importance which the local populace attached to retinues is reflected in the petitions which the Dutch were showered with (*Memoir left by Van Imhoff, 1740*, tr. by S. Peters, Colombo: Govt Printer, 1911, p. 30).

Chart *Description of the dress of the Native Headmen in the early nineteenth century*

CASTE OF HEADMEN	COAT	TRIMMING	SWORD	BELT
WELLALE[a] CASTE				
Maha Modeliars	Velvet, Silk or Cloth		Hilt and Scabbard of pure massive or wrought Gold, or Silver inlaid with Gold	Of Gold or Silver Lace or Silk, Embroidered or spangled with Gold or Silver
Modeliars of the Gate or Guard			Hilt and Scabbard of Silver inlaid with Gold	
Modeliars of the Attepattoe, Modeliars of the Corles, Mohotiars of the Guard and Attepattoe, and Mohandirams of the Guard			Hilt and Scabbard of Silver, Hilt inlaid with Gold	
Mohandirams of the Attepattoe, the Basnaike and Padicarre Mohandirams, and the Mohandirams employed as Interpreters in the Courts of the several Provincial Judges	Silk or Cloth	Gold or Silver Lace Loops and Buttons	Hilt and Scabbard of Silver, and the Eyes and Tongue of the Lion's Head of Gold	Of Gold or Silver Lace but not spangled
The Corals Mohandirams, and Mohandirams employed as Interpreters in the Court of the Sitting Magistrates.			Hilt and Scabbard of Silver, and in the middle of the Scabbard a plain Silver plate	
Arrachies	Cloth or Linen	Silver Buttons and Loops	Hilt and Scabbard of Silver with 2 plain plates of Tortoise-shell on the Scabbard	Of Coloured Ribbon embroidered with Flowers of Gold or Silver Thread
Canganies			Hilt of Horn inlaid with Silver, the Scabbard of horn or wood with 8 Silver Bands	Of Coloured Ribbon without embroidery
FISHERMEN[b] & CHANDOOS[c] CASTE				
Modeliars and Mahavidahn Modeliars	Silk or Cloth	Silver Buttons and Loops	Hilt and Scabbard of Silver and the Eyes and Tongue of the Lion's Head of Gold	Of Gold or Silver Lace but not spangled
Mahavidahns, Mahavidahn Mohandiram, Pategatyn Mohandiram and all other Mohandirams of the same Caste.	Cloth or Linen	Silver Buttons and Loops	Hilt and Scabbard of Silver in the middle of the Scabbard a plain plate of Tortoise-shell	Of Gold and Silver Lace
Arrachies		Silver Buttons and Silk Loops	Hilt of Horn, embellished with Silver, with 3 Tortoise-shell plates	Of Coloured Ribbon embroidered with Silk
Canganies		Silver Buttons and Silk Loops	Hilt of Horn, embellished with Silver, the Scabbard of Horn or wood with 2 silver plates	Of plain Coloured Ribbon
BLACKSMITHS'[d] & WASHERMEN[e] CASTE				
Mahavidahns, Mahavidahn Mohandirams	Cloth or Linen	Silver Buttons and Loops	Hilt and Scabbard of Silver, must be 1 plate of Tortoise-shell on the Scabbard and 2 plates of Tortoise-shell to be worn by the Washermen	Of Ribbon embroidered with Flowers of Gold or Silver
Arrachies	Linen	Silver Buttons and Silk Loops	Hilt Horn embellished with Silver, the Scabbard of Horn or Wood with 3 Silver Bands	Of plain Coloured Ribbon
Canganies		Horn, or covered Linen Buttons	Hilt of Horn, the Scabbard of Horn or Wood, with 3 Copper Bands	Of plain Ribbon
BARBERS'[f] CASTE				
Vidahn Mohandiram	Cloth or Linen	Silver Buttons and Loops	Hilt and Scabbard of Silver but on the Scabbard there must be 2 plates of Tortoise-shell	Of Coloured Ribbon embroidered with Flowers of Silver Thread

The Titular Headmen of each Rank are to be dressed in every respect as the Headmen of the Rank and Caste to which they belong, but as a distinguished mark the word 'Titular' is to be engraved on the Hilt of the Sword.

[a]read as Goyigama [c]read as Durāva [e]read as Rajaka
[b]read as Karāva [d]read as Navandanna [f]read as Ambättayō or Panniki

Source: [Abraham] de Saram, 1906, where it has been reproduced from *The Ceylon Almanac*, 1811, Colombo: Govt Printer. Successive *Ceylon Almanacs* in the 1810s contained vestimentary codes. That of the year 1815 is reproduced in Patrick Peebles, 1973, table 1, pp. 66–8. There appears to be no significant difference. It is to be presumed that this code was a carry-over from late Dutch times.

Note: The Salâgáma are conspicuous by their absence. Cf. text, pp. 63–4, 68–73, 90–1 and 136. Since going to press, I have (in 1981) discovered that the Salāgama were formerly part of this 'Regulation and Schedule of dress of the native headmen', but managed 'to get themselves excluded and exempted' on 19 August 1809 (*Ceylon Literary Register*, 1891, v, p. 285).

wear belts (sashes) of gold or silver lace, but not have these sashes spangled, a stipulation that applied to the fourth rank of Goyigama *mudaliyars* and contrasted with the spangled gold or silver sashes displayed by the first three ranks of Goyigama headmen. Worse still, for the leading Karāva and Durāva *mudaliyars*, their coat trimmings – silver buttons and loops – were the same as that of mere Goyigama 'Arrachies', and were in sharp contrast with the gold lace loops and buttons which the first five ranks of Goyigama headmen were permitted to display. The relational significance of these gradations is also implicit in Christoffel de Saram's description in 1818 of 'the Superior classes' of Karāva (note the internal distinction) in Colombo and Galle: 'they are called fishers of the Roll . . . under the controul of the Headmen of their own caste called Pattangatyn and if they are of the first order they have the Rank and esteem amongst them, that the Mohandirams have among the Wellales [Goyigama]'.[126] These features, in other words, were an index to the structural distance between different castes.

In the light of this discussion, therefore, it can be suggested that by the eighteenth century, if not earlier, a hierarchical system of caste stratification was in operation *within the Low-Country Sinhalese districts*, and that the Karāva, Salāgama and Durāva were included within the system. As was the case in so many Indian localities and as recognised in the literature on Sinhalese caste,[127] there was no clearly defined hierarchy, and caste lists set out in ladder-like form convey an impression of precision which the system never possessed. The KSD castes were not found in all sub-regions in the hinterland and such castes as the Batgama, Hinnä, Ambättayō were not found in several areas. By 'hierarchical system of caste stratification'[128] is meant a societal order (1) in which hierarchical values were pervasive and were influenced by concepts of purity and pollution as well as by Buddhist ethics; (2) in which there was a wide

[126] RCS in 1818 in CO 54/71, fols. 94–5.
[127] Hayley, 1923, p. 149; and Ryan, 1953, pp. 85–6.
[128] The use of the term 'stratification' is not intended to suggest that the theories of stratification associated with the sociology of Western industrial settings can be extended to Sri Lanka on the comparative lines attempted by Bailey (e.g. 1963) and others. In this connection, see the article reprinted as an appendix in Dumont, 1972.

measure of agreement that the Goyigama were the highest caste, though a few voices were beginning to question this by the late eighteenth century; (3) in which the Goyigama functioned as an apical reference point by virtue of their ritual status, social privileges, control of valued economic resources and political strength; (4) in which the Navandanna were considered a respectable caste; (5) in which the position of the Karāva, Salāgama and Durāva was uncertain and in dispute, but in which each of these castes was regarded *by other castes* as a 'low caste', that is, placed in the broad category of castes considered to be inferior to the Goyigama, though it was allowed that they were of higher status than several menial castes; and (6) in which the low and despised position of such castes as the Beravā, Hinnā, Baṭgama, Oli, Pali and Demala Gattara was never in doubt.

This hierarchical system of caste stratification could be said to have performed an integrative function for Sinhalese culture, albeit abrasively and dialectically. In British times the integrative influence of this system increased, even as its more rigid features weakened. As the Maritime Provinces and the Kandyan Provinces were brought together in one polity, as the improvement of communications and the incursions of capitalism took place, the centralising and integrative process in the system of caste stratification continued. But these events also marked significant changes in the wider polity and its institutional and normative structure. The changing polity bred new challenges to the caste order, among them the economic gains and social advances of a number of families drawn from among the KSD castes. In some measure this was an acceleration of tendencies seen in Dutch times, though the institutional setting and ideological milieu in which these trends occurred were so different as to give them a qualitatively greater significance in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In particular, the emergence of new elites was in part an outcome of foundations erected in the Portuguese and Dutch periods: the accumulation of capital and land for one; the gathering of experience in commercial activity or new occupations for another. These developments had even seeded incipient challenges to the power, social status and caste primacy of the Goyigama in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Before progressing,

therefore, to the heart of this study, the fruition of these developments in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it is necessary to outline some of the economic and social changes in Portuguese and Dutch times.

4
Economic opportunities and social relations, 1500s–1790s

In this chapter the information on the diversification of occupations that was presented in the previous chapter will be intermeshed with other data to outline the opportunities which residents in the Maritime Provinces had to extend their economic resources. Some of the consequences for social relations that seem to have accompanied these developments will then be traced. Throughout, the focus will largely be on the regions in the Maritime Provinces where Sinhalese-speakers have been in a majority, that is, the Low-Country Sinhalese districts.

Commerce and opportunities for economic advancement

From well before the advent of the European powers, it is known, Sri Lanka occupied an important place in the inter-Asian trade, particularly in commodity exchange along the extended coastline of the Indian sub-continent (see maps 4 and 5). The island provided such commodities as arecanuts, cinnamon, elephants, gems, timber, coconuts, coconut oil, cordage, coir and tobacco. At such ports as Mannar, Kalpitiya and Jaffna in the Tamil areas, at Kottiyar and Batticaloa on the eastern coast and at Puttalam, Chilaw, Kammala, Negombo, Mutwal, Colombo, Panadura, Kalutara, Maggona, Beruwala, Alutgama, Welitara, Gintota, Galle, Weligama and Matara along the southwestern coast, these items were exchanged for rice, spices, dried fish, cloth, opium and other imports.

It follows that these products had to circulate within the island and that the export products had to reach the ports. In addition, one has to take note of the internal trade, including that which occurred along the island coastline – for the sea was

by far the best medium for bulk transport when the monsoon was not at its height. Such internal exchange was inherent in the differential distribution of natural resources and regional differences in land use. Writing of the late sixteenth century, before Portuguese rule was firmly established, C. R. de Silva states that the 'farmers often exchanged arecanuts for cloth, salt, and saltfish brought by itinerant traders to the villages. These traders in turn conveyed the arecanut to the seaports where they sold it to others who handled the export of the product.'[1] The Kandyan Kingdom in the interior served as a market for cloth, dried fish, salt, opium, arrack, coconuts and coconut oil. In its turn, it was a source of paddy and other grains, arecanuts, cardamoms and tobacco, besides such luxury items as gems and elephants.[2] By the last decades of the eighteenth century there is evidence of coffee and pepper being increasingly sought within the interior kingdom, while such items as jaggery, saffron and firewood are also mentioned; besides the commodities referred to previously the coastways trade at this stage included onions, earthenware pots and pans and 'all sorts of building materials such as chunam, roof and ridge tiles, building and floor bricks'; while arrack entered the market in increasing quantities, both as an export to India and as a trading commodity in the Kandyan districts.[3]

Germane to this discussion is C. R. de Silva's emphatic finding that in the Kotte Kingdom of the sixteenth century there was 'a substantial circulation of money' and that a significant portion of the royal revenue was paid in cash.[4] Market transactions probably increased in Portuguese and Dutch times. Besides labour, money (i.e. *fanams*) and paddy, arecanut and pepper figure prominently in the Portuguese revenue registers as a means of tax payment. Given its importance in the

[1] C. R. de Silva, 1975, p. 96.

[2] B. J. Perera, 1951, pp. 117–18, 200–3, 315; Abeyasinghe, 1966, pp. 158–9, 162, 167–71; C. R. de Silva, 1971, pp. 29, 33; and 1975, pp. 87–104; Arasaratnam, 1958, chapter VII esp. pp. 147–8; 1972; and 1964b, pp. 109–30; and Dewaraja, 1972, pp. 183–4.

[3] Dewaraja, 1972, pp. 183–4; Colvin R. de Silva, 1962, pp. 451–3, 459; Samaraweera, 1973, pp. 48–55; CO 416/2, Answers [from] Lt Taylor, fols. 235, 240–2, 252–3; Upali C. Wickremeratne, 1964, pp. 235, 269. Also A., 'A trip to Matura', *Ceylon Magazine*, I: VIII, Apr. 1841, p. 368.

[4] C. R. de Silva, 1975, pp. 89–93, 104, 105ff. Also see Abeyasinghe, 1966, chaps. VI and VII esp. pp. 168–70; and Kulasuriya, 1976, pp. 146–55.

Indo-Lanka trade exchanges, it is not surprising that arecanut was 'a medium of barter and a source of cash income for the villager' – in colonial times as well as in the sixteenth century, perhaps more so in the sixteenth century when the residents did not have to contend with the monopoly state purchases initiated by the Portuguese.[5]

It is evident that the state administration loomed large in the process by which a surplus was gathered and exported. The kings of Kotte appear to have maintained a monopoly over the sale of cinnamon; and there was considerable state intervention in the gathering and export of gems, arecanut and elephants, though trade was never a royal monopoly.[6] These practices provided a congenial setting for the mercantilist notions and extractive colonial goals of the Portuguese and Dutch. State control of economic activities and state monopolies were extended and made more rigorous.

The Portuguese and Dutch governments used their taxation rights and the labour services of the inhabitants to extract their needs in elephants, arecanuts, cinnamon, cardamoms, pepper, salt and other supplies. The labour services were compulsory duties, sometimes paid for, sometimes free. These traditional methods of commodity extraction restricted the scope for private enterprise. Arecanut was compulsorily purchased at low prices from the early seventeenth century.[7] Cinnamon was so greatly valued, however, that incentives were provided for extra collections. Thus, the Portuguese paid two xeraphins (less than 3s in 1903) for every *bahar* (600 lb) of cinnamon above the quota which each peeler was expected to supply. This principle was continued in Dutch times and was known as *gel kaneel*. These bonus possibilities and the normal payments (at low prices) for their quotas provided the cinnamon peelers with the opportunity to accumulate capital.[8] For the most part, this benefit must have been confined to the Salāgama caste and may have been of particular advantage to them from the 1760s when the Dutch deliberately extended their privileges. To these highly restricted opportunities within the official framework, however, one must add the possibilities of illegal trade in these monopolised commodities (except elephants!). It is to be

[5] C. R. de Silva, 1975, p. 95. [6] *Ibid.*, pp. 97–8, 104. [7] *Ibid.*, p. 104.
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 93; and 1972, pp. 191–9; and Kotelawele, 1967, pp. 6–9.

suspected that Portuguese *casados* (married settlers) were not averse to participation in this trade themselves; while the kings of Sitawaka and Kandy certainly had an interest in circumventing the monopoly. However, the most important arena for indigenous enterprise was the supply of needs within the island. It is the argument in this section of the book that in the period extending from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries the opportunity was provided for some individuals to accumulate capital through commodity production, extractive gathering operations and trade; while several service occupations provided additional means of making a little money.

For much of the period under review, cinnamon, and in some measure such products as coffee, arecanut and fruit, were gathered rather than produced. They were gifts of nature, and not systematically cultivated. Indeed, till about the 1770s, it was widely believed that cinnamon would only flourish in a wild state – so that the Dutch Governor Falck's innovation of cinnamon plantations was a major technological advance.[9] Tobacco, paddy, the coconut tree and perhaps some cardamoms, coffee, pepper and fruit were of a different order in receiving manual propagation or investment, whether the goals were those of consumption or exchange in the market. Of these sources of livelihood the arecanut and coconut trees were easily the most important for the commodity market, with the latter serving as the source of coconuts, coconut oil, toddy, arrack, coir, rope, mats, cadjan and other products. Arecanut had been more important than coconut products as a medium of barter in the Kotte Kingdom in the late sixteenth century, but it is likely that the monopoly regulations of the colonial powers in regard to arecanut and the increasing demand for coconut products enabled the coconut tree to become more important than the arecanut tree in the rural economy of many localities. Its growth in importance was not without vicissitudes and difficulties. The expansion of coconut cultivation was probably retarded by the continuous warfare in the Portuguese period and during the triangular conflict between the Portuguese, the Dutch and Rajasingha II of Kandy in the middle decades of the seventeenth century. The economic interests of the Dutch

[9] See Kanapathypillai, 1969, chap. VI and p. 301.

focused so strongly on cinnamon that they sought to preserve the waste land and forests in which cinnamon was found. They enacted regulations which sought to restrict shifting cultivation as well as the extension of garden land. Instances are recorded when gardens of coconut trees were even destroyed.[10] Despite these discouragements, there seems to have been an increase in the area under coconut-tree cultivation – a trend which had begun in the fifteenth century according to C. R. de Silva[11] and which can be credited partly to the growth of the population. The trend was certainly noticeable in the eighteenth century as part of a broader movement towards an increase in the extent of cultivated land, with the *mudaliyars* and other headmen as the principal beneficiaries of this tendency.[12] Burnand observed that the coconut landowners were growing richer in the last decades of the eighteenth century and believed this to be associated with the distillation of arrack. These observations are supported by other evidence and it is evident that by the 1800s the coastal strip from Colombo southwards beyond Galle was a continuous coconut (or cinnamon) grove and supported much arrack and toddy distilling.[13]

In much of the literature, inadequate attention has been paid to the role of two basic food items in the trading structure: namely, paddy and fish. The fact that large quantities of paddy were imported should not blind us to the commodity production of paddy in certain localities. The Batticaloa District, certain parts of the Kandyan Kingdom and the Matara District appear to have produced a surplus (perhaps intermittently). In 1759 the Dutch discovered that Matara was the centre of a 'thriving illegal coastal trade in paddy' – 105 vessels, 82 of them without passes and each with a carrying capacity of 1,400–2,000 lb being found on this occasion.[14] The *mudaliyars* were certainly reaping the advantages of surpluses produced on their lands, whether of paddy, coconut or other produce.[15]

Today, one is likely to underestimate the importance of fish

[10] *Ibid.*, pp. 242–3; Kotelawele, 1968, pp. 140–1, 146ff; and the Dutch proclamations in CO 54/124, Schedule X.

[11] C. R. de Silva, 1971, pp. 25, 34; and 1975, pp. 95–6.

[12] Kotelawele, 1968, pp. 135–8, 147, 154–6; and P. E. Pieris, 1918, pp. 86, 155.

[13] Burnand, 1842, pp. 53–5, 162; Cordiner, 1807, p. 416; Bertolacci, 1817, p. 324; and Ferguson's *Ceylon Directory, 1883–84*, p. 64.

[14] Kotelawele, 1967, p. 13.

[15] *Ibid.*, pp. 15–16; and Arasaratnam, 1971a, p. 67.

in the diet of the indigenous communities in the past. Among the Buddhist majority the consumption of meat, especially of beef, must have been restricted. This implies that the staple diet of rice or *kurakkan* was garnished with condiments and vegetables, and with *karawala* (dried fish), *jāḍi* (pickled fish) or salted fish. These latter were easily transported. Indeed, for labour gangs on *rājakāriya* duty or militia on a field march they must have been standard rations, just as they were for fishermen on a long voyage; dried fish, on this reasoning, was to the island people what jerky was to the American cowboys and trappers in the Wild West. During the southwest monsoon the Sinhalese fishermen of the southwestern coast generally migrated to the Mullaitivu, Batticaloa and Patnangala localities on the east coast (see maps 2 and 3). Here their surplus catch was dried and salted.[16] It is probable that a part of the surplus reaped along the southwestern coast was also converted into dried or salted fish. C. R. de Silva suggests that 'there was a widespread consumption of salted fish' in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.[17] Dried fish was certainly among the commodities carried to the Kandyan areas by Karāva and Moor traders. It is of some significance that in the 1860s migrant Karāva fishermen from the southern coast were in the habit of selling dried fish at the little port of Hambantota so that it could be taken by pack cattle to Uva District.[18] This nineteenth-century trading pattern in the isolated southeastern districts reflects previous patterns in the southwest. However, the population in the southwest was such that a market for fresh fish must also have existed.[19] Fish is a highly perishable item and the transport network was not highly developed, but one must not underrate the walking range of a fish-vendor bearing a *pingo*-load of fish, or the usefulness of the sea, the rivers and the Dutch canals as a means of taking the harvests to market. In the early 1800s the canal bank at Grandpass in the town of Colombo was 'constantly crowded with large flat-bottomed boats', which came down from Negombo, sixteen miles to the north, laden 'with dried fish and roes, shrimps, firewood and

[16] Note the reference to the 'curing of fish' along the coasts where the population was scanty, in Horton to Stanley, no. 43, 9 October 1833, CO 54/131.

[17] C. R. de Silva, 1975, p. 95.

[18] *AR 1868*, pp. 218–19.

[19] See G. C. Mendis (ed.), 1956, p. 19.

other articles'.[20] In this connection the substantial proportion of Catholics in the population of the Low-Country areas (especially in Portuguese times) must be taken into account. The expansion of Catholicism must perforce have produced an extension in the demand for fish, especially on Fridays.[21]

The needs of a military power, the incipient urbanisation and Westernisation also generated demands for certain commodities, while encouraging occupational diversification. The building of fortifications received high priority always. Churches and public buildings and the housing needs of the Dutch Burgher townsfolk would have added to the money-making opportunities for contractors who provided timber, tiles, floorstones, bricks, lime and other building supplies. The Dutch East India Company had its own tileworks at Kelaniya, but Loten notes that private tilemakers were found in the villages. The Dutch also burnt lime in abundance, the supplies being received from indigenous contractors at fixed prices.[22] Again, the furniture industry received a considerable stimulus during these centuries. As we have noticed, the Dutch channelled some *rājakāriya* services into this line, but it is likely that there was scope for private enterprise. Dutch styles of furniture manufacture have remained a rich legacy to this day.

In other areas, too, a demand was generated for timber, coir, rope and mats. The cinnamon exports needed to be packed and tied in mats and these items were purchased by the Dutch government.[23] A number of 'waterfront industries' were associated with the shipbuilding industry. Shipbuilding pre-dates the Portuguese arrival, for the *yāthra dhoni* was a specifically Sinhalese craft, known locally as the *yāthra oruva*, and a fair-weather coastal junk that dates back to the ninth century at the very least.[24] Thus, in the earliest of the Portuguese *tombo* in 1599 it is noted: 'the river of Caleture [Kalutara] is large and has much wood and has many iron-smiths and carpenters and is a good place to make vessels'.[25] Artisan skills and the shipbuilding

[20] Cordiner, 1807, p. 50.

[21] I am indebted to Dr C. R. de Silva for this suggestion.

[22] *Memoir of Loten, 1757*, 1935, pp. 80–1.

[23] Personal communication from Dr C. R. de Silva.

[24] Hornell, 1920, pp. 158–9, 220–1; and below, p. 88. Also see C. R. de Silva, 1975, pp. 99–100; and Panditaratne, 1960, p. 130.

[25] C. R. de Silva, 1975, p. 111.

trade undoubtedly received encouragement from the Portuguese and Dutch needs. Several Portuguese sources point to its prevalence along the coast. Among the locations (see maps 2 and 4) at which ships appear to have been constructed were Negombo, Mutwal, Kalutara, Panadura and Maggona.[26]

At the same time there developed a category of trades which can be viewed as service trades of the *dubash* agency or jobber type. It is not known whether the military commissariats of the Portuguese and Dutch received their food supplies and maintained their spit-and-polish through the use of compulsory free labour, compulsory paid labour or the use of supply contractors and laundry contractors. If the latter, we have here one of the *dubash* trades I have in mind. The most significant of these *dubash* operations, however, were those associated with the operation of government rights of taxation which were farmed out or auctioned to the highest bidder; 'rents' or 'tax farms' as they were termed subsequently by the British. Commissioning others to do its work of revenue collection through these 'rents' was a convenient way for foreign rule to reduce its administrative costs and to circumvent its lack of local knowledge. It was a form of decentralisation and indirect administration; and, for the indigenous agent, a brokerage operation. These brokers were known locally as *rēndarāla* or 'renters'. In Dutch times, the most important of these rents seem to have been those associated with fish and fish nets, ferries, tolls at frontier posts, export-duty collections, the paddy tax, the bazaar tax and the retailing of arrack in specified areas.[27] There is reason to conjecture that some of these renting operations generated some capital during the eighteenth century, just as they did in the nineteenth. In stark contrast with nineteenth-century conditions, however, it is evident that the Goyigama *mudaliyars* were heavily involved in the renting trade. In the case of the paddy tax, this is not surprising because caste norms prevailed to such an extent that Goyigama landholders objected to renters from 'lower castes'.[28] Though the suggestion is contested by Kanapathypillai, it appears that the Dutch government restricted many of these rents (of all types) to the native officials or

[26] *Ibid.*, pp. 99–101, 105, 111–13.

[27] Arasaratnam, 1971, p. 65; Upali C. Wickremeratne, 1964, pp. 31–53; and Jayasekera, 1970, pp. 25–8.

[28] Kotelawele, 1968, p. 167.

headmen,[29] a body in which the Goyigama were the preponderant element. Arasaratnam believes that the only competition which 'the chieftain families' faced came from 'Chetty and Moor financiers'.[30] In his study of the early years (1796–1802) of British administration in the Maritime Provinces, Upali Wickremeratne found that in the Sinhalese areas Moor renters came into increasing prominence and secured the largest number of rents. However, his survey discloses that at this stage the renters were an ethnically polyglot category – including a number of Sinhalese, besides a sprinkling of Chetties, Dutch and Malays. Among the Sinhalese were several *mudaliyars*, though it is significant that a marked decrease in their participation occurred within this short period.[31] By the early nineteenth century, to extrapolate from the careers of Juan de Croos, Hettiyakandagē Juan Fernando (1752–1839) and Vidanalagē Pedro de Mel (1783–1850), a few Parava and Karāva investors were involved in arrack renting in a substantial way.[32] The possibility that their interests in this field commenced in the previous century cannot be ruled out.

In general, if one can rely on Burnand, arrack and toddy distilling was a source of some wealth from the late eighteenth century. This comment might be linked to evidence from the 1820s which stressed that the 'principal source from whence the maritime Inhabitants derived their subsistence was that of distilling arrack, which to them was like agriculture'[33] – an exaggeration undoubtedly, but nevertheless suggestive of the role which this occupation had assumed in the coastal district from Colombo southwards.

An important innovation in the late eighteenth century was Falck's initiation of land grants known as *tunhavul*, literally meaning 'three parts'. These were allotments granted in freehold to individuals on condition that they devoted one-

[29] Moratuwa Petition, 1829.

[30] 1971a, p. 27. Also see Samaraweera, 1973, pp. 49, 65. In support of Kanapathypillai is a piece of evidence to the effect that one 'Luis Pires' at Kalutara was 'renter of the Company' in 1707 (Manoel de Miranda, 1921, p. 116).

[31] Upali C. Wickremeratne, 1964, pp. 31–53, 221, 260–1.

[32] Moratuwa Friend-in-Need Society, *Centenary Souvenir*, 1951, p. 26; Karunaratne, 1940; and CO 416/32/488–92, petition from Juan de Cross, 29 Jan. 1831.

[33] Burnand, 1842, pp. 53, 55, 162; and CO 416/31/no. 597, fols. 637–48 (information supplied by Dr Peebles).

third of the area to cinnamon cultivation and delivered a crop to the Dutch.[34] This system appears to have provided a further stimulus to the slow extension of cultivation which was already taking place, partly through encroachments. It is reasonably certain that the *mudaliyars* and other headmen were the principal recipients of such grants and were the principal landholders in Dutch times. Among the headmen, it is also evident that the Goyigama *mudaliyars* were leading landholders.[35] While Kotelawele notes that some of these indigenous officials and indigenous rich held 'large landed estates, some of which extended up to thirty land holdings', it should be stressed that the acreages held were relatively small in comparison with that of subsequent centuries. 'A hundred acres would have been an unusually large [coconut] plantation', according to Paul Pieris.[36]

It is in conjunction with such evidence on the landed resources held by the 'upper ranks of Sinhalese officialdom' that Kotelawele stresses that several *mudaliyars* were beginning to furnish their houses in European style and that the *mudaliyars* of the Colombo Dissavany were prosperous and able to pay their dues in money. In providing other evidence of cash transactions among the indigenous people, he implies that the generation of cash incomes was not uncommon.[37]

This was not restricted to Portuguese and Dutch rule; as indicated earlier, C. R. de Silva's findings reveal that there was a substantial circulation of money in the Kotte Kingdom. What is important is that some measure of monetisation persisted through several centuries and that the eighteenth century witnessed an expansion of commodity production and trade, an increase in the lands under cultivation and yet more occupational diversification.

If, then, the economy of the Portuguese and Dutch colony known as the Maritime Provinces was not an exchange economy, at the very least there was some exchange in the economy. Money was used. Goods circulated. And who carried and retailed the goods? In the light of the colonial records it has

[34] Kanapathypillai, 1970.
[35] Kotelawele, 1967, pp. 15–16; Burnand, 1842, p. 154; CO 416/2, A. 6; and Peebles, 1973, pp. 50–4 and chap. 3.
[36] Kotelawele, 1967, p. 16; and P. E. Pieris, 1918, p. 155.
[37] Kotelawele, 1967, pp. 16, 20, 24; and 1968, pp. 136–7.

been widely believed that the Moors dominated the trade in the Sinhalese districts.[38] The social organisation of the Sinhalese certainly created a structural niche for such outside intermediaries. While conceding that there were a few Sinhalese traders in the late eighteenth century, Kanapathypillai remains adamant that most of the traders were Moors.[39] In observing that 'the Lebbies form[ed] the greatest number of small capitalist and active merchants in the country', the first British governor lends qualified support for this contention.[40]

However, in the 1800s, a British official unequivocally recorded that the residents of Moratuwa, Panadura and other coastal districts were bartering arrack in the interior, and John D'Oyly found the Karāva involved in trade with the interior.[41] This was not a sudden development. By the eighteenth century some Karāva had settled in five or six hamlets in the Four Korales between Colombo and Kandy and been drafted into the *maḍigē badda* (transport department) by the Kandyan state. Lorna Dewaraja has revealed how these men were involved in precisely the type of trading relations between the interior and the coast that has been described in the course of this chapter.[42] Specific family traditions lend further support on this point. It is said that Warusahännädigē Joseph de Soysa (1764–*c.*1839) of Panadura and Hännädigē David Pieris (died 1843) of Moratuwa traded in tobacco and hired out bullock carts about the turn of the eighteenth century. Since the latter's father, H. Hendrick Pieris, is reputed to have been a man of some wealth, while Joseph de Soysa's father is reputed to have visited the Kandyan country, the assumption is that they too were merchants of some sort.[43] K. D. T. Nilamelagē Jeremias Pieris is also reputed to have been a 'pioneer capitalist' in Dutch times.[44]

38 C. R. de Silva, 1972, pp. 10 and 33; and Arasaratnam, 1958, p. 204. *Re* the Moors in the *maḍigē* department within the Kingdom of Kandy, see Ralph Pieris, 1956, pp. 32, 100 and 183; and Davy, 1821, p. 126.

39 Personal communication (Jan. 1977). Also see DNA Lanka, 6/899A, Collector, Tangalle to Chief Sec., 29 Jan. 1827.

40 Quoted in Upali C. Wickremeratne, 1964, p. 49.

41 Peebles, 1973, p. 170; and Diary of John D'Oyly, 1917.

42 Dewaraja, 1972, pp. 183–4.

43 Holy Emmanuel Church, *Centenary Souvenir*, 1960, pp. 40–2.

44 'Making heroes of scions of the divine heroes of democracy' in *The Searchlight*, 31 Mar. 1966.

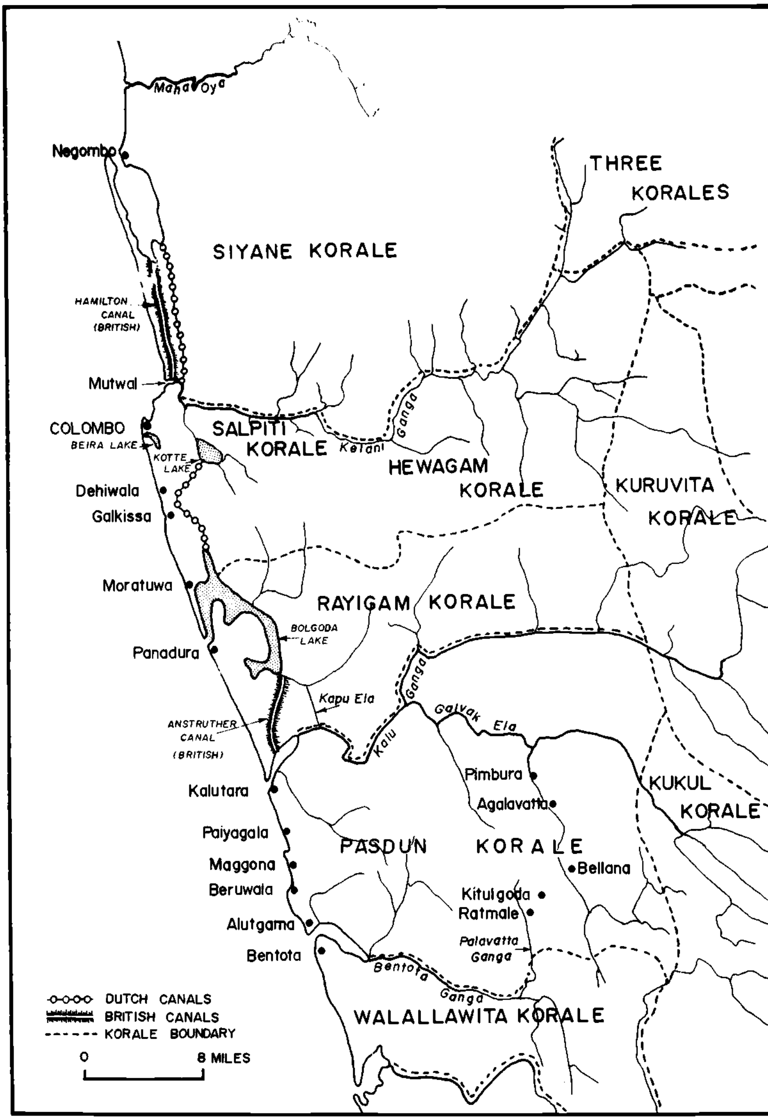
While bullock carts may have been put to some use in some coastal areas during the eighteenth century, for the most part such trading activity would have involved the control of pack-cattle: however, it must be remembered that from pre-Portuguese times such rivers as the Maha Oya, the Kelani Ganga, the Kalu Ganga and the Nilwala Ganga provided access to the interior. Subsequently, the canals built by the Dutch supplemented these trading links with waterways running on a north–south axis parallel to the western coast (see map 7). Scattered evidence dating from the early seventeenth to the early nineteenth centuries indicates that these inland waterways were utilised for the transport of merchandise.[45] There is also evidence that *dhonies* journeyed down the coast in the eighteenth century to such localities of surplus rice production as Matara for trading transactions; indeed, participation in such trade was one of the privileges held by the Salāgama – and a practice which they continued into the 1810s at least.[46] In their command of outrigger canoes (*oruva*) and dugouts, Karāva fishermen had an obvious point of departure, primary assets, for a shift into the carrying trade or the occupations of pedlar or merchant. Their skills in woodwork would also have been of benefit in the construction of bullock carts in late Dutch and early British times.

Karāva traditions also maintain that some of their ancestors were involved in the maritime carrying trade with India from pre-British times. Hännädigē Hendrick Pieris Jun. and Vidānalagē Pedro de Mel are specifically reputed to have been the owners of *dhonies*; the former is said to have had a shipyard at Grandpass, while the latter is said to have carried on 'a coasting trade with India'.[47] This folklore is supported by a reference in an Anglican minister's speech in Moratuwa in 1851: 'Among many a business concern that gave employment to your people in an appreciable degree years ago were the government rent of the fishery, *the coasting trade and the commercial intercourse* with India, and also the distillation and sale of arrack in the

[45] C. R. de Silva, 1972, p. 185; *Memoir of Becker, 1716*, 1914, p. 30; CO 416/2, A. 8, fol. 206; G. C. Mendis (ed.) 1956, pp. 14, 82; and J. W. Bennett, *Ceylon and Its Capabilities*, London: William H. Allen, 1843, pp. 90, 156, 159, 165.

[46] Kotelawele, 1967, p. 13; and Koorundu, 1833, p. 281.

[47] Holy Emmanuel Church, *Jubilee Memorials*, 1910, p. 8n; and Roberts, 1975a, p. 6.



7 The inland waterways in the Western Province during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Based on S. A. W. Mottau, 'Governor van Imhoff and his scheme of inland river communications in the Colombo Dissavany', *University of Ceylon Review*, vol. v: 1, April 1947 and *Sessional Paper I of 1901*

Colony.'[48] So too did the Karāva in their petition of 1830 include among their contemporary occupations 'Merchandise in Merchant Dhonies or Boats, (sailing to Coast with the produce of this Country, and returning from thence with the produce of those Countries) . . . Importation and Exportation of Goods'.[49] Oblique support for this tradition is provided by what we know of the *yāthra dhoni*. These coastal shipping vessels, generally carrying 50 tons of cargo, were 'very numerous' in the coastal carrying trade along the island's coast and with India in the nineteenth century.[50] As they had an ancient ancestry and were related to the specifically Sinhalese outrigger fishing boat (the *oruva*) in their design, it can be safely presumed that they had been in use for the same purposes for several centuries; indeed, Hornell places their heyday in the centuries immediately preceding the arrival of the Portuguese. It is possible that the Moors, who seem to have dominated the Asian sector of the carrying traffic in western India from about the thirteenth century,[51] may have adopted this craft; but they had available a whole range of types of vessel for this purpose, and it is likely that they stuck more closely to the Arab tradition and used such craft as the *nauri*, the *dhangi*, the *sambuk* or the *baggala* (better known as the Arab dhow); or alternatively, the *battela*, *padao* and *machwas* which were Indian vessels typical of the western coast of peninsular India.[52] Several of these vessels were larger and more seaworthy than the *yāthra dhoni*. There is a fair presumption, then, that several of these *yāthra dhoni* were Sinhalese-owned, just as the Jaffna *dhonies* were largely under Tamil control; and there are wisps of evidence in support of this presumption.[53]

By the late eighteenth century, therefore, a number of Karāva had become craftsmen, pedlars, and arrack distillers,

[48] Moratuwa Friend-in-Need Society, *Centenary Souvenir*, 1951, p. 27. Emphasis added.

[49] Karāva Petition, 1830 in CO 54/131, fol. 473.

[50] Hornell, 1920, pp. 158–9, 220–1; and 1926, pp. 43–5, 49–50. Also see A. A. Perera, *Glimpses of Sinhalese Social Life*, Bombay: 1904, p. 29.

[51] Ashin Das Gupta, *Malabar in Asian Trade*, Cambridge University Press, 1967, pp. 5–12, 103; and Arasaratnam, 1958, pp. 146ff. Cf. Arasaratnam, 1972.

[52] See J. Edye, 1834; and Hornell, 1920; 1926; and 1943. Also B. J. Perera, 1951, pp. 203, 314–15.

[53] Colvin R. de Silva, 1962, pp. 459, 451; above, p. 81; and *Memoirs of Van Goens 1663–1675*, 1932, p. 9.

while a few were owners or masters of *dhonies* and yet others had invested in land and relied on agricultural produce for their livelihood. Among the latter were a handful of Karāva *mudaliyars*, a leadership category which had existed from Portuguese times and shared some of the privileges available to high officials in the period under review.

The evidence is so sketchy that one must be cautious in one's conclusions as to the relative economic position of various communities and caste groups in the Low-Country Sinhalese districts. The vibrant parish history traditions within certain Karāva localities may have thrown up more information on the Karāva, information which unintentionally weights the scales towards an emphasis on Karāva prominence. Nevertheless, even the scanty threads of data are adequate to *suggest* that the Karāva were second only to the Moors (probably a poor second) in the commercial sector during the eighteenth century and that government rents were largely in the hands of Goyigama headmen and Moors (and perhaps Colombo Chetties), while the principal landholders were Goyigama. Land was still the principal economic resource and a determining factor in social status. As such, the Goyigama elite held an important hand of cards that was ably seconded by a sequence of trumps: the strategic roles in the administrative system held by a number of Goyigama *mudaliyars*, the latter's access to the Dutch and the authority derived from these positions.

Social and political repercussions

The administrative framework was so crucial that the social challenge to the Goyigama in the late eighteenth century seems to have emanated less from the Karāva elite than from the Salāgama elite. Whereas the Karāva and the Durāva were represented by regional headmen, under the colonial powers the Salāgama were tightly organised as a state department, with a Dutch officer at the head and three regional divisions supervised by indigenous headmen from the Salāgama caste.[54] It was part of the regular duty of Salāgama cinnamon peelers to

[54] Abeyasinghe, 1966, pp. 136–8; Kanapathypillai, 1969; and Colvin R. de Silva, 1962, pp. 388–91, 419–20. By the 1800s, the divisions were known as the *Mahabadda*, the *Sulubadda* and the *Ruhunubadda*.

go out into the hinterland in gangs (called *ranchus*) and set up camps called *wāḍiya* to collect the cinnamon that grew wild. The work was arduous and the peelers were subject to considerable pressure. In consequence, in the 1730s a number of peelers fled to the Kingdom of Kandy.[55] The difficulties of the Dutch in the mid-seventeenth century were enhanced when a rebellion erupted in the Low-Country districts during the 1760s, with the connivance of some Goyigama headmen. Thereafter, the Dutch government began to use the Salāgama as a counterpoise. The governors Falck (1766–85) and De Graaf (1785–94) 'did everything possible to win their loyalty and make them attached to the interests of the Company'.

> [In] consequence the low and despised group of Chalias obtained in the period [1766–96] privileges not enjoyed by any other inhabitants. Special consideration in the grant of lands, exemption from land dues, and tolls at ferries, the right of plying vessels without paying anchorage dues, the free collection of salt, and the right to trade in it as well as arrack, and exemption from the jurisdiction of the ordinary courts were some of the privileges granted to the Chalias . . . [In fact], they became the chief instruments for the execution of the harsh land policies that affected the other inhabitants. It was they who reported the felling of illicit chenas, served on commissions that reported the suitability of granting land for chena cultivation and supervised the destruction of garden crops that were found in cinnamon lands.[56]

These developments encouraged the Salāgama elite (i.e. their headmen families) to be assertive and to adopt the life-style associated with the Goyigama aristocracy and the Dutch. It is significant that at some stage during Dutch rule the Sālagama headmen were able to jettison the pejorative title of *durayā* which had been attached to their offices in the days of the Sinhalese kings and in the middle decades of the seventeenth century.[57] By the early nineteenth century they had also assumed such public symbols of prestige as travelling in palanquins.[58] Several European observers in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries described the Salāgama as

[55] Kotelawele, 1968, pp. 76–7; and Koorundu, 1833.

[56] Kanapathypillai, 1969, pp. 299–300. Also see Adrian Rajapakse in de Jonville, 1803, pp. 444–5; and Colvin R. de Silva, 1962, pp. 388–91.

[57] *Memoir of Joan Maetsuyker, 1650*, 1927, p. 11; C. R. de Silva, 1972, p. 191; personal communication from Dr D. A. Kotelawele (Jan. 1977); and Kotelawele, 1978, p. 208.

[58] Diary of John D'Oyly, 1917, p. 240.

'arrogant', 'presumptuous', 'turbulent to rule', 'ambitious and vain' and 'prone to insult the castes which are superior to them'.[59]

At this stage the leading notables among the Salāgama were drawn from the de Abrew Rajapakse family. A letter addressed to a British official named Sir Alexander Johnston by Adrian de Abrew Rajapakse in 1816 is of great relevance to this discussion. It notes that the Salāgama caste had been 'always submissive' to the successive Western powers and had in consequence been 'dignified and raised to the highest rank' and gained 'honorary titles and privileges above many other castes'. In what must be viewed as a statement of goals rather than a *de facto* situation, the letter proclaimed the cultural autonomy of the Salāgama and their refusal to kowtow to any other caste:

> The whole Class of the Mahabadde are solely occupied in performing Government Service, and in their own agricultural views; as they will serve no other caste however poor they may be . . . There is one leading principle among them, which is, that [they] will hold no intercourse or have any intimacy with any but those of their own class, in order that they may preserve their manners, customs, and usages, unaltered.[60]

But any suggestion of a drive towards caste autonomy should be set off against Rajapakse's reiteration of the origin myth of the Salāgama with an emphasis on their Brahmin status, and against the claim to ritual primacy in the local caste hierarchy that was attached to this emphasis – an emphasis that embodied a special twist which does not seem to have existed within the same myth in Portuguese times in the seventeenth century.[61]

Predictably, these new claims and status symbols 'evoked the chagrin and envy' of other castes,[62] especially the Goyigama. Thus, in looking back on the events leading to the origin of the Amarapura *Nikāya*, a Sinhalese observer remarked upon

[59] Sluiysken in CO 54/124, Schedule XXI, fol. 507; Bertolacci, 1817, p. 241; and Horton to Stanley, 23 Nov. 1833 in CO 54/131, fols. 9–10.

[60] A. de A. Rajapakse, 1816, pp. 533–4. However, cf. Kotelawele, 1968, pp. 142ff; Koorundu, 1833; G. C. Mendis (ed.), 1956, pp. 90, 189ff; and Samaraweera, 1973, p. 65.

[61] Jayasekera, 1970, p. 43; and Queyroz, 1930, pp. 1018–19. Cf. Abeyasinghe, 1966, pp. 139–40.

[62] Kanapathypillai, 1969, p. 299.

the ambitions of the Salāgama and the fact that they had 'always [been] rivals of the low-country Vellales' (i.e. the Goyigama).[63] For this reason, one can speak of the 'Hāli–Govi' (Salāgama–Goyigama) contest in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a struggle which anticipated the heightening of rivalry between the Karāva and the Goyigama by over half a century.

The Salāgama elite and Salāgama caste were not alone in their social advance. There is other evidence of innovation in the customary structure of caste relations and the attributes attached to a caste. The Hunu people in the Low-Country seem to have been converted into a service caste of the Karāva, while the Hinnā caste were in a similar satellite status to the Salāgama. By the late eighteenth century, if not earlier, the Rajaka washermen were expected to perform ritual services not only for the Goyigama, Navandanna, Badahäla and Hannāli, but also for the Karāva, Durāva and Ambättayō, with the Palī washermen performing these services for most of the other castes and the Hinnā washing for the Salāgama.[64] By the early nineteenth century the Ambättayō barbers, who had come over from India in association with the Karāva, appear to have had the task of shaving 'the Wellalas and Fishers [Karāva], but *none of the other castes*'.[65] In other words, they were a walking symbol of the privileges and high status of the Karāva, a status secondary only to that of the Goyigama. It is significant, too, that in 1726 Valentyn found 'the highest classes or ranks of fishermen [Karāva] participat[ing] in the privileges of the Vellala';[66] while the Dutch governor, Loten (1752–7), in accepting the notion of a single caste hierarchy, placed the Karāva above the Navandanna and second in rank to the Goyigama.[67] It is significant that the Karāva had secured the right to the *tovilē* services of the Rajaka, Hunu and Ambättayō, and perhaps of the Be-

[63] A. de Silva, 1847, pp. 275–6.

[64] de Saram, 1906, pp. 5–6; and Report of the Fourth Maha Mudaliyar in RCS in 1818 in CO 54/71, fols. 91–104. Also see Ryan, 1953, pp. 115–20, 129, 186–7, 262 and chap. 8.

[65] Report of the Fourth Maha Mudaliyar in RCS in 1818, CO 54/71; and de Saram, 1906, pp. 4–5. Cf. the Mukkuvāns along the Malabar coast who had a special section of their caste, of lower status, called the Kāvuthiyans, to act as their barbers (Thurston, 1909, vol. v, p. 108).

[66] Valentyn in Philalethes, 1817, p. 327.

[67] *Memoir of Loten, 1757*, 1935, pp. 28–30.

ravā too, by the late eighteenth century. It suggests a *tendency* towards the creation of a parallel hierarchy and a condition of caste autonomy.

Whatever the origins of these symbolic privileges, the Karāva guarded them jealously. Contrary to their own traditions,[68] there is little evidence that they lost much ground during the period of Dutch rule. Rycklof Van Goens' report indicates that the Karāva at Negombo continued to enjoy Dutch favour and special privileges in the 1660s.[69] And these pages would have illustrated that the Karāva were among those who entered into occupational diversification and capital accumulation in Dutch times. Clearly, then, the Karāva had evolved useful foundations for their social advances in British times.

Nor were these gains of the Salāgama and Karāva isolated examples of changes in the structure of social relations between castes. The Ambättayō extracted advantages. For one, within the little town of Colombo their special ritual relationship with the Karāva was acknowledged by the reciprocal *divel* (patron's services) of the latter: the Karāva bore the coffins of the Ambättayō at funerals. For another, by 1818 they had managed to secure from the British governor the right to wear swords 'though formerly it was never permitted'. Similarly, the Rajaka caste are reported to 'have raised themselves so far that they have a Modliar and an Aratchy over them as their Headmen, but only over their own Caste' – a development dating from Dutch times in the eighteenth century.[70] The puzzled resignation and sense of disquiet which permeates Christoffel de Saram's observations in 1818 are not without social significance. Such disquiet, as we shall soon see, was echoed in stronger fashion by members of the Kandyan aristocracy as they looked reprovingly on these proceedings from their majestic domain in the hills.

These instances point to a more general tendency. The

[68] E.g. de Fonseka, 1921.

[69] *Memoirs of Van Goens 1663–1675*, 1932, pp. 8–9, 19; cf. p. 40.

[70] Report of the Fourth Maha Mudaliyar in RCS in 1818, CO 54/71; and de Saram, 1906, pp. 4–5. The special relationship between the Ambättayō and Karāva also seems to be reflected in the fact that Karāva traders from Magalle who ventured overseas in the early twentieth century sometimes took along with them Ambättayō employees (information supplied by Professor Bruce Kapferer).

administrative structure created by the Portuguese and Dutch, the changes they effected in land tenure, in the fiscal system and in *rājakāriya*, the occupational diversification and the slow growth of commercial and agricultural opportunities which permitted some families to accumulate capital, all these were partial solvents of the *status quo*. They modified the structures of social stratification and caste stratification.

For the inhabitants in the Low-Country Sinhalese districts, however, there were considerable limits to the degree of spatial and social mobility. A sample of restrictive Dutch regulations is reproduced in illustration of some obstacles, their date of promulgation being noted in parentheses:[71]

> Prohibition of the low casts removing from one place of abode to another without knowledge of the Headmen of their village on pain of being corporally punished (15 August 1663).
>
> Order to the Chingalese in general and to the low casts in particular to observe in their cloathing the customs, laws and manners of the country (11 August 1686).
>
> That the natives who intend to take their abode at another but their birth place are to take a license of the Headman under whose jurisdiction they reside on pain of being put in irons for . . . one year (12 September 1703).

These were mere policy statements. It is axiomatic that there is normally a wide gap between the intentions of a colonial power and the implementation of these intentions. These regulations, however, were in reinforcement of custom. For the most part they would have received the support of a phalanx of headmen, headed by the Goyigama headmen, besides that of the numerically preponderant Goyigama caste. The headmen would also have at their command an intimate knowledge of the people and the powers derived from the *rājakāriya* system. The former Dutch official, Burnand, was emphatic in his opinion that 'native chiefs of the interior' had a stake 'in the maintenance of the old order of things'; and an early British official remarked on the 'overmightiness of the Vellale' (i.e. Goyigama) as a restrictive influence.[72] One of the principal themes in Cole-

[71] See Schedule X in CO 54/124.

[72] Burnand, 1842, p. 154; and ? (the reference for one of the quotations has been misplaced). Also see Kotelawele, 1978, pp. 208–9.

brooke's report on the *rājakāriya* system in 1832 was the manner in which it upheld 'the distinctions of caste and the privileges of the headmen'.[73] In turn, 'from habit and prejudice, as well as from interest, the headmen [upheld] the distinctions of caste, and counteract[ed] the attempt of the subordinate castes to improve their condition'.[74] Horton underlined and echoed these views a few years later. There can be no doubt that the headmen had an interest in maintaining 'the regulated inferiority of the lower castes' and that this interest 'militated against changes in caste ranking'.[75] Though these observations may apply in some measure to all categories of headmen, they must be interpreted as especially applicable to the Goyigama headmen. On some fronts the non-Goyigama caste headmen spearheaded caste mobility and caste resistance to the badges of inferiority which custom decreed.

The Goyigama headmen in the Low-Country were not without external assistance in their opposition to the incremental status gains of the non-Goyigama castes or caste elites. The Kandyan aristocracy had a stake in the *status quo*. They viewed the innovations in the Low-Country with concern. The disease could spread to their polity. In 1677, therefore, one finds a chief priest in Kandy complaining to the Dutch regarding the selection of some Karāva to posts to which he considered they were not entitled by birth. Again, after the political independence of the Kandyan Kingdom had been bartered away in 1815, the Kandyan chiefs expressed their disapproval of the positions and privileges held by the *mudaliyars* of the 'Karawe, Durawe, Halagama and other low castes' in the Low-Country districts, specifically referring to the fact that these *mudaliyars* were 'accustomed to travel in Palanquins'.[76] They even warned that such developments would not be permitted within the Kandyan country. Whether their specific interventions were successful or not, what counts is the force of opinion they could bring to bear on social relations in the Low-Country. They

[73] G. C. Mendis (ed.), 1956, pp. 50–1, 40–5, 116, 189–211.

[74] *Ibid.*, p. 48.

[75] *Ibid.*, pp. 48–9, 69–70; and Horton to Stanley, 23 Nov. 1833 in CO 54/131.

[76] Arasaratnam, 1958, p. 233, and Diary of John D'Oyly, 1917, p. 240. Horton (citation above) specifically remarked on the 'exclusive possession of all power' which 'the higher castes' had held till recently in the Kandyan Provinces. This situation was said to be still prevalent so that 'the lower castes' were 'in a state of great degradation and general poverty'.

were, after all, the *radala* (aristocratic sub-caste) folk among 'the good people' in the heartland of Sinhalese culture. Their moral and diplomatic support in favour of age-old caste distinctions was even seconded by material assistance to the Goyigama notables in the lowlands. Burnand informs us they served as the latters' 'patrons', protecting the Low-Country headmen families 'from father to son, and [giving] them an asylum in adverse times'.[77]

Under such conditions there would have been disadvantages for the KSD castes in extending their economic investments or permanent residential location from the coastal zone to the immediate hinterland (within the Maritime Provinces).[78] It is noticeable that the new occupations and duties of the Karāva were mostly those that went with residence near the coast. The forays of the Salāgama peelers were temporary incursions, more significant perhaps in strengthening group consciousness and producing caste friction than altering the pattern of social relations in the immediate hinterland.

A review

In effect, the discussion thus far has been attempting to assess the degree of social change that occurred in the Maritime Provinces during the period of Portuguese and Dutch rule. This attempt has involved reference to the continuities as well as the changes in the administrative, occupational and caste structures, to the rigidities as well as to the solvents in the forces that governed social relations. The data assembled here supports the attention that has recently been devoted to the social and economic changes that occurred in Sinhalese society in Portuguese and Dutch times by such historians as C. R. de Silva, Kanapathypillai, Kotelawele and Peebles.[79] These scholars, it

[77] 1842, p. 154. On the status connotations of the term '*honda minissu*' or 'good people' as against '*väda karana minissu*', see Ralph Pieris, 1956, p. 171; and Yalman, 1961, p. 103.

[78] It is even possible to suggest that the KSD people were subject to fewer disadvantages in the Kandyan areas than in the hinterland of the Low-Country, because in the former they might have been categorised as strangers or a quasi-caste like the *Marakkala* (Moors). See Yalman, 1967, pp. 60, 86.

[79] C. R. de Silva, 1972, pp. 250–1; and 1975, p. 104 and *passim*; Peebles, 1973, chaps. 2 and 3; the implications of my discussions with Dr Kanapathypillai at various times; and Kotelawele, 1978.

should be stressed, recognise the persistence of structural supports for the *status quo* and the consequent limitations on the social changes that occurred. These limitations made the situation all the more abrasive and problematic. Those caste elites and castes which had improved their lot found the prevailing system irksome. As the island was administratively united under the British and the scope for mobility increased, this became even more so. The 'claims of the Vellale [Goyigama] to superiority' rested shakily in the midst of these opportunities and in the face of men of 'wealth and intelligence' which the ranks of the non-Goyigama castes had already produced. The KSD castes were not without their own 'pretensions', however, and the early nineteenth century was also marked by stirrings among the castes which were traditionally placed lower in the existing caste hierarchy.[80]

The quickening of pace and the social jostling that occurred during the first three to four decades of British rule were a reflection of further changes in the institutional setting and governing ethos. These were taken much further by a series of administrative reforms in the 1830s. The rapid extension of coffee and coconut plantations in subsequent decades encouraged this transformation yet more explosively. The KSD elites could burst several old bonds and cross new boundaries. Their forward thrusts grew apace.

[80] Horton to Stanley, 23 Nov. 1833, CO 54/131; G. C. Mendis (ed.), *Colebrooke–Cameron Papers*, 1956, pp. 48–9; and Kannangara, 1966, pp. 210, 243–4.

5

The British period: the economic advances of a Karāva elite

After their conquest of the Maritime Provinces in 1795–6, the British eventually took control of the Kandyan Kingdom in 1815. Initially, a separate administration under the governor was maintained in the latter territory. It was not till 1833 that the two territories were brought under a unified administrative system. While continuing to rely on indigenous headmen for district and village administration, the tendency was to bring these functionaries under increasing control and to set up specialised departments (e.g. survey, public works, police) as the need arose. In the meanwhile, the separation of the judicial and executive branches of administration promoted the evolution of a network of judicial posts and services. This process of political and administrative unification was cemented during the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by the extension of communications. Begun in the 1820s, the Colombo–Kandy road was fully bridged and completed by 1832. If the construction of this road was motivated largely by strategic political considerations, subsequent road building was stimulated by economic growth and economic motives, though a few roads were also constructed to serve administrative needs. Though not without regional unevenness, the island's road network has long been one of its most remarkable and economically significant features. This network was soon supplemented by the development of postal and telegraphic services, the completion of a railroad from Colombo to Kandy in 1867, the subsequent elaboration of a rail network till it had encompassed a mileage of 713 by the year 1924 and the development of an artificial harbour at Colombo by the 1880s.[1]

[1] See L. A. Wickremeratne's chapter in *UCHC*, 1973, pp. 303–16; Bingham, 1921–3; and the maps in G. C. Mendis, 1952.

During the early decades of British rule there were a few *ad hoc* modifications in the economic structure which took it away from the regulated mercantilist economy of the Dutch era. The more basic changes came in the 1830s. Some of these were the result of reforms initiated by the Colebrooke–Cameron Commission which visited the island in 1829–30. In accordance with their suggestions, the *rājakāriya* system was abolished in 1832, most government monopolies were given up, and steps were initiated to sell the government's cinnamon plantations and its *gabaḍāgam* (Crown villages and fields). While the British administration had transmitted Crown land to individuals through a system of land grants since North's period of governorship (1798–1805), in 1833 a regularised system for the sale of Crown land was established as a result of directions from the Colonial Office. Crown land could now be purchased at auction sales subject to a minimum level of 5s (later £1) per acre. This reform reduced the significance of official patronage and permitted individuals to initiate the process of land purchase. Freehold rights in the land could now be extended considerably. Property rights, property transactions and the law of contract were supported by numerous statutory measures and administrative acts and by the administrative and legal machinery of government. The substantial expansion in capitalism generated by these measures was taken further by one of the spearheads of a market society: the privately owned cash crop plantation, namely the coffee plantations and the coconut plantations (and subsequently other crops).[2]

If the forces of capitalism were both exogenous and autochthonous, the former dominated. One can, therefore, speak of the penetration of foreign capitalism into the island. It is a commonplace in the literature on colonial history that such a process disrupts the indigenous social and economic structures and generates unfortunate consequences. While the constraints on indigenous economic development may have been considerable in the long term, and immediately depressive effects in some sectors of the existing economy cannot be discounted,

[2] For elaboration of the points summarised here, see Roberts in *UCHC*, 1973a, pp. 117–64; and Roberts, 1972a. For other interpretations and useful information, see Peebles, 1973, pp. 98–105, chap. 6 and appendix; K. M. de Silva, 1967; and Ameer Ali, 1972a.

Sri Lanka seems to have been relatively fortunate.[3] Indigenous economic enterprise did not undergo the total eclipse and suffocation that is alleged to have occurred in Dutch Indonesia.[4] These developments added a whole new range of employment opportunities and investment possibilities. While subject to important limitations and to contractions at places and times, the number of offices, roles and prestigious positions generated by this process was generally on the increase throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries till the onset of the Great Depression in 1929–30; and the latter, too, was a temporary setback (till further problems overtook the economy in the 1960s).

In sum, following the inroads of capitalism in the British period, the structure of opportunity expanded. This growth must not be viewed only in institutional terms. It had a spatial dimension. In some measure, the plantation, the road, the market and the other forces of capitalism functioned as land-development agents, which opened up new areas for colonisation, especially in the 'top country' within the highlands and in the margins of the wet zone. In lesser measure this spatial extension of opportunities for the island peoples went beyond the island strand and across the Indian Ocean to the far-flung ports and markets of the British Empire.

The openings were seized not only by European capitalists and other Asian migrants, but also by indigenous inhabitants. However uneven in its diffusion, the economic and social transformation provided the Ceylonese with several opportunities of upward social mobility. One broad category of opportunities was that of capital investment and economic enterprise, often in new fields. These included the import–export houses and a variety of trading activities, government contracts and toll rents, the arrack trade, cash crop production on smallholdings or plantations, urban property investments, the gem trade and

[3] For information on the island's economic history, see Vandendriesen, 1960; Snodgrass, 1966; Roberts, 1970a and 1972a; Ameer Ali, 1970 and 1972a; and the relevant chapters in *UCHC*, 1973.

[4] Van Der Kroef, 1956, pp. 3, 15–17, summarising and endorsing the views of J. H. Boeke and his school of thought, and that of A. H. Ballendux. Also see J. H. Boeke, *The Evolution of the Netherlands Indies Economy*, New York: 1946.

the graphite trade.[5] The natural resources of the island were such that one cannot speak of 'industrial capitalism', though graphite and gem mining and a few 'factories' producing consumer items or processing exports might be placed within that description. The avenues of economic enterprise might be described as 'commercial capitalism' and 'plantation capitalism'. As indicated in chapter one, indigenous participation on a significant scale in plantation agriculture presents a relatively unique feature in the history of colonial Asia and stands in contrast with the story of the indigenous bourgeoisie in such lands as Dutch Indonesia and British India. The plantation was to the Ceylonese bourgeoisie what the cotton mill was to the Indian bourgeoisie in British colonial times – though it must also be remembered that in both instances these investments were preceded and made possible by indigenous commercial capitalism.

Another important area of opportunity was the familiar one: educational acquirements, generally in English, which were then utilised as a means of securing a prestigious occupation.

These two broadly defined avenues of social advance and elite formation, of course, were closely intertwined. The pioneer entrepreneurs used their wealth to educate their children in the best schools, and even to send them abroad for education or professional training at higher levels. The second and third generations employed their education and their social contacts to consolidate their elite status. In other instances, prestigious occupations provided stepping-stones to elite territory, and the acquisition of landed property from professional earnings, or a judicious marriage, supported the consolidation of such gains. These primary avenues of upward mobility were complemented by other secondary or tertiary channels. Strategic marriage alliances and the establishment of *pelāntiyas*, or status groups made up of a family phalanx of selected kin,[6] constituted one such supplementary process. Another was that of life-style; in other words, the conspicuous attributes and symbols of elite status. These symbols helped to legitimate advances that had been gained by other means.

Among the Ceylonese, these opportunities for upward

[5] For further information, see Roberts, 1974a, pp. 564–74; 1973c, pp. 263–84; and Roberts (ed.), 1979, chap. 4.

[6] See Obeyesekere, 1967, chap. 9.

mobility were mostly taken up by personnel from among the Burghers, the Ceylon Tamils, the Moors and the Low-Country Sinhalese. The participation of the Kandyans in these fields was negligible till well into the twentieth century. The Low-Country Sinhalese stake was considerable in virtually all spheres.[7] Among the latter, the elite roles secured by the Karāva were substantial and disproportionate to their numerical proportion in the population. They became, in consequence, a social and political force in their own right within the island and were able to extend their influence beyond their areas of residential concentration. The rest of this chapter will illustrate and document these gains.

The rise of the Warusahännädigē de Soysas

One can begin with a summary of the entrepreneurial achievements of a particular family, the Warusahännädigē de Soysas, because their capitalist investments placed them in the forefront of the indigenous bourgeoisie from the 1850s till recent times.

The Warusahännädigē de Soysas resided initially at Nalluruwa, Panadura, in the late eighteenth century but later moved to Moratuwa, after they became associated with the Hännädigē Pierises in a trading enterprise which hired out bullock carts and traded in tobacco. W. Joseph de Soysa (1764–*c.* 1839) married H. Francesca Pieris in 1792 and their third child and second son was W. Jeronis de Soysa (1797–1862). Originally trained as an ayurvedic physician (practitioner of native medicine), Jeronis is alleged to have been the first young man from Moratuwa to have ventured into the Central Highlands 'to try the new field' which it presented.[8] Around 1825 he set up in business as a firewood contractor to the government. He soon extended his business into that of a general merchant, supplying rice and dealing in native coffee, and presumably in the other commodities available in the Kandyan districts. He may also have been a transport contractor. To these lines he added speculative investments in the arrack and toll rents in the Central Province. He then purchased several potential planta-

[7] Roberts in *UCHC*, 1973c, pp. 279–84, and below, pp. 226–31.

[8] *Ceylon Observer*, 23 Apr. 1870. However, see above, p. 85.

tion properties from the Crown. One of these, purchased in association with a Goyigama *kachcheri mudaliyar* (a headman at the district office) at Kandy, was 'the coffee garden called Diyatalakanda situated at Hanguranketa of Diyatilake Korale', in extent 482 acres and 38 perches. Outbidding several European competitors, they acquired this property for £411. 1s on 11 April 1837. These purchases have been described as the turning-point in Jeronis de Soysa's career. Including this purchase, the data collected by Patrick Peebles reveals that in the period 1837–42 he spent (at the very least) approximately £1,200 to acquire about 908 acres; and that in every instance he paid more than the upset price of £0. 5s per acre. The extent of liquid capital which he commanded is witness to the profits in trade, in arrack and toll renting and in the cultivation of coffee. He continued to expand his activities in these fields during the 1840s. He also established a bank at Kandy in 1839[9] – an enterprise which appears to have survived till the 1870s. In association with his brothers, Domingo, Susew and Antoni, he was one of the island's leading renters in the 1840s and early 1850s. As a result of his concomitant acts of philanthropy, the British administration honoured him with the highest possible titular rank, that of a *Mudaliyar* of the Governor's Gate, in the year 1853. Having reached this career landmark, Jeronis de Soysa retired to the lowlands, leaving his highland enterprises under the management of his brother, Susew, and other trusted managers; and soon he ceased to invest in arrack rents. Some degree of stigma attached to the latter trade and it is to be presumed that he considered it to be out of line with his new status.[10]

In the meanwhile, Jeronis and Susew de Soysa continued to invest in new plantation properties, both in the highlands and the Low-Country, the estates in the latter region being devoted to cinnamon or coconut cultivation. By the 1860s their economic investments had clearly shifted to plantation capitalism. The data listed in Ferguson's *Ceylon Directory* for 1863 provides only a partial picture of the holdings which both of them (Jeronis died in 1862) had in the Central Highlands, but these

9 Peebles, 1973, pp. 202–3 – enforcing a revision of Roberts, 1975a, p. 9.

10 Documentation for this paragraph can be located in the somewhat fuller account in Roberts, 1975a, pp. 40–3.

add up to 2,035 acres, most of it cultivated with coffee. A journalist, writing in 1862, observed that Jeronis de Soysa's Hanguranketa plantation alone yielded £1,000 a year. In 1849 he had purchased his partner's share in this property and, as it had been expanded by other purchases, it eventually encompassed about 1,000 acres by 1870.

Jeronis had only one son, Charles Henry de Soysa (1836–90). Since Susew de Soysa (1809–81) died without issue, most of his properties devolved on C. H. de Soysa. The plantation properties held by Susew and C. H. de Soysa at three points in time, in 1871, 1880–1 and 1890–1, as depicted in the *Ceylon Directories*, are indicated in table 6. These statistics are probably underestimates which do not include smaller holdings.[11] Broad confirmation of their veracity is provided by the data unearthed by Patrick Peebles in the course of his intensive study of Crown land sales in the period 1860–89; C. H. de Soysa purchased 7,522 acres for Rs. 270,605 (approximately £27,000) during this period, and Susew de Soysa bought 4,696 acres for Rs. 79,056. Whatever way you view this data, it adds up to an investment of monumental proportions in the context of the time. In 1880–1, C. H. de Soysa's holdings extended to some 25,176 acres, with 16,796 acres under cultivation. Few European proprietors could have matched this. Equally striking is the indication that the Warusahännädigē de Soysas had judiciously diversified their economic base during the third quarter of the century, not relying solely upon coffee cultivation as some other plantation owners did. Besides a wide variety of plantations, they controlled large extents of urban property, a steam-driven oil mill, sawmills and other business concerns. The Diyatalawa Mills had been established by the 1870s, if not earlier, and were initially employed in the processing of coffee besides the production of coconut oil. They soon became one of Colombo's landmarks, being referred to widely as the 'de Soysa Mills'.[12] As a result of these multiple investments, C. H. de Soysa was able to tide over the 'coffee depression' of the 1880s. Indeed, there is some indication that he profited in the long

[11] According to Sir Wilfred (L. W. A.) de Soysa's reminiscences as communicated to Sunimal Fernando in 1963, the properties owned by C. H. de Soysa at the time of his death in 1890 are believed to have added up to 115,000 acres.

[12] Ferguson's *Ceylon Directory 1875*, p. 673; and George J. A. Skeen, 1887, map.

run, because he was able to buy out several bankrupt capitalists. This stage in the family history also throws light on a neglected side of the island's economic history: the fact that the 1870s and 1880s were years of growth and prosperity for the coconut and graphite industries just as much as they witnessed the decline of the coffee industry.

The growth of the de Soysa economic empire was also assisted by a marriage alliance effected in 1863. In February of that year, C. H. de Soysa had been married to Catherine de Silva, the only daughter of an arrack renter and merchant named Lindamulagē Juse de Silva, also of Moratuwa. The latter was described later in 1871 as second only to C. H. de Soysa 'in point of wealth, . . . or as Mr C. H. de Soysa calls it, the little necessaries of life'.[13] Mrs C. H. de Soysa, therefore, was an heiress. In this sense, C. H. de Soysa was to become the legatee and focus of three lineages of entrepreneurial activity.

Though 'his constitution' had 'never [been] robust',[14] C. H. de Soysa fathered seven daughters and eight sons. For every one of his daughters, marriages were arranged either with talented Karāva men in the professions or with Karāva plantation owners: these were Dr Solomon Fernando, C. M. Fernando (advocate and Crown Counsel), J. G. C. Mendis (teacher and school principal), Dr H. Marcus Fernando (physician and plantation owner, later knighted), Dr William H. de Silva, Francis Perera Abeyewardena (planter and plumbago merchant) and Louis H. S. Pieris (advocate and plantation owner).[15] Most of these betrothals led to outstanding 'society weddings'. Richly dowered, it is expected that the daughters contributed towards the economic fortunes of these men. In the meanwhile, the surviving sons developed into merchants and plantation owners in their own right, if in varying measure of success. In the self-descriptions recorded in Wright's *Twentieth Century Impressions of Ceylon* in 1907, besides plantations, the economic interests of Lady Catherine de Soysa and the sons included several plumbago pits and mines, an import–export business (held by T. H. A. de Soysa), coconut-oil mills, a fibre factory and a modernised cable and rope factory at Negombo.

[13] *The Examiner*, 9 Dec. 1871, editorial.

[14] *T. Cent. Imp.*, 1907, p. 538.

[15] *Ibid.*, pp. 538–53; and Abeyesooriya, n.d.

When the Municipality of Colombo provided an estimate of the assets held by the richer Sinhalese in the city in 1915, the estimate, covering five of the eight wards, appraised 'the estate of C. H. de Soysa' at Rs. 1,034,010, the only one to reach the million mark, and almost four hundred thousand rupees more than the next in line. Since some of his sons are separately listed in this compilation (see table 7), his estate appears as an outstanding stock of capital. This estimate is also an index to the family's urban property investments. My researches into the housing assessment registers in Kandy for the years 1872, 1891, 1911 and 1927, and in Colombo for 1927, provide further confirmation on this point. The holdings of the de Soysas that came to light in the process are set out in table 7 in terms of houses owned and officially assessed rental value. In the meantime, against the grain of most Sinhalese family histories, R. E. S. and A. J. R. de Soysa returned to the trade of arrack renting in the twentieth century; and the former was one of the most outstanding and successful arrack renters in the 1920s. Despite all this diversification, the principal area of capital investment among the de Soysas remained that of plantation capitalism: mostly in coconut, but including tea, rubber and cinnamon. Data gathered from the *Ceylon Directories* is set out in table 8 in confirmation of this point.

The monumental accumulations of the Warusahännädigē de Soysas, of course, do not amount to 'the rise of a Karāva elite'. One case cannot prove a generalisation. The story has been included here with illustrative intent, to infuse flesh and blood into the statistical foundations and broad descriptions that follow. The house of de Soysa may have been a mountain, but it did not stand in isolation among surrounding flats. There were other Ceylonese hills, many of them Karāva, in the capitalist countryside.

Karāva economic expansion

Together with the Moor merchants, Karāva traders, renters and artisans were among the earliest entrepreneurs to move into the Kandyan districts in the wake of the British occupation. There were several other families who emulated Jeronis de Soysa, though perhaps in lesser measure. Subsequently, others

moved up the Kelani Valley into the Ratnapura area (also a Kandyan district); while Karāva merchants from the southern coast played a prominent role in the commercial activities in the Morawak Korale and other interior plantation districts in the Southern Province. Several merchants from the southern coast had trading establishments in Batticaloa and Trincomalee Districts in what may be termed their 'frontier days', in the 1890s and 1900s. A. B. Mathias de Silva of Matara was even producing textiles in Batticaloa on the out-worker system, importing yarn and supplying a bevy of weavers from whom, presumably, he received the finished products at fixed rates. Others went yet farther afield, across the waters to such colonial ports and towns as Dar-es-Salaam, Mombasa, Aden, Bombay, Penang, Singapore, Shanghai and Hong Kong. The people of Magalle in Galle seem to have specialised in these ventures. Through their contacts with shipping personnel and British officials they secured passages for themselves and their kin in order to open up trading concerns in other colonial ports. As hawkers and bumboatmen, lace and curio dealers, jewellers and merchants, they took their risks in these distant trading marts, a few even penetrating inland Africa to Blantyre and Nairobi, and others going as far as the Canary Islands, Argentina and Australia.[16] Among the few Sinhalese to compete with the Moors in the gem and jewellery trade during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were two Karāva firms who achieved a measure of success: namely H. H. M. de Silva and Co. and B. P. de Silva and Co. The latter is still a flourishing concern in Sri Lanka and Malaysia and has widened its interests into the wristwatch trade. If one were to pick any one of the fields of commercial capitalism in which Ceylonese participation had been feasible, it is likely that one would locate a Karāva merchant who had carved out a successful role for himself at some stage in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Thus, whether as ships' chandlers (e.g. Christopher and Simon Perera Abeyewardena and S. P. D. B. D. de Silva of Galle), sawmill owners and barrel manufacturers (M. Simon Fernando Sri Chandrasekera), timber contractors (the Lindamulagē de Silva Wijeyeratnes), or citronella-oil dealers

[16] Kapferer, 1976; and Lange, n.d.

(B. Samaraweera of Weligama), the Karāva had produced successful entrepreneurs.

Probably the most lucrative and notable area of Karāva trading investment was that of arrack and toll renting. Arrack and toddy are prepared from the nectar that collects in the flowers of coconut palms that are cut and bound for the purpose. The distilling and wholesale trade in these alcoholic beverages was subject to a number of government regulations. Following Dutch practice, the British annually auctioned the right to retail arrack and toddy in defined locations. These were known as 'arrack farms'. In effect, a number of monopoly franchises were presented for competitive lease every year. A varying range of bridge, ferry and toll rents added to their number. While the latter represented a relatively simple operation, the tasks of an arrack renter were more problematic and involved organisational skills which could secure adequate supplies, the supervision of sales at the retail outlets (the licensed taverns) and the control of illicit sales within the area of the farm. Both arrack and toll rents were also risky ventures and a few entrepreneurs were ruined by their investments in these fields.[17]

From about the 1820s, if not earlier, both these trades seem to have been dominated by the Karāva. Hettiyakandagē Juan Fernando, Vidānalagē Pedro de Mel and his son, V. Francisco de Mel (1809–96), were early renters who made profits in this field. The latter's success in these investments enabled him to open coconut plantations in the Kurunegala and Chilaw districts and to invest in graphite mining. If his eldest son, Pedro, came to grief in the arrack trade, not so some of his other sons: Johannes, Manuel and Jacob de Mel were eminently successful arrack and toll renters in the mid-nineteenth century. Other Karāva renters of note in the nineteenth century were: Lindamulagē Jusé de Silva (*c.*1815–89), Warusahännädigē Harmanis Soysa (1822–82), Hettiyakandagē Joseph Fernando (?–1890), Hänwedigē Andris Pieris (1827–95) and his son, Henry Joseph Pieris (1858–1918), Ponnahännädigē Jeremias Dias (1848–1902), Lindamulagē John Clovis de Silva (1852–1916), P. Domingo Dias (1853–?), Appuhännädigē Don Baban

[17] See Peebles, 1973, chap. 5. Also see Gabriel de Silva, 1895; M. A. Perera, 1896; *T. Cent. Imp.*, 1907, pp. 679–84; and Roberts (ed.), 1979, chap. 4.

Appu of Mirissa (*c.*1818–77), M. Thomas de Silva Amarasuriya (1847–1907), James Amarasuriya and Appuhännädigē Don Bastian de Silva (*c.*1863–1917). In the first three decades of the twentieth century Mahawadugē Cornelis Perera (1872–1924), P. C. H. Dias (1865–1931), R. E. S. and A. J. R. de Soysa, Thomas Rodrigo and M. Matthes Salgado were among the arrack renters of consequence (toll renting being no longer important). There were non-Karāva renters. The Bharatha family from Negombo, the de Croos family, and some Goyigama participated in the renting opportunities in a big way, as did a few Moors and Chetties in the early decades of British rule. However, it is clear that the majority of arrack and toll renters were Karāva. Peebles has analysed the rent ledgers of the Western Province in the period 1858–99 and identified sixty large-scale renters (of whom only about thirty entered the trade regularly). Over two-thirds of this number were Karāva. And the majority of these Karāva were from the Protestant Karāva community within Moratuwa.[18] Peebles' complete list of renters added up to over 400 names. Some of his detailed data has been made available to me: from the list of 189 renters in the Western Province derived from this data, my caste analysis[19] reveals that 158 were Karāva, 11 Goyigama, 2 Salāgama and 2 Wahumpura, while the caste of 16 renters could not be identified and the Durāva were conspicuous by their absence. In other words, at least 84 per cent were Karāva.

While the graphite industry was dominated by the Low-Country Sinhalese, the Karāva role in this sphere was less pronounced than in that of the arrack industry. Goyigama, Salāgama and Wahumpura entrepreneurs had significant footholds in this field, while N.D.P. Silva (Goyigama) was widely regarded as 'the plumbago king' at the turn of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, the Karāva mine owners and dealers appear to have held the largest stake, if one can rely on numbers as a guideline on this issue. Of the thirty-three plumbago merchants (thirty Sinhalese) listed in the *Twentieth Century Impressions of Ceylon* in 1907, fifteen were Karāva, eight Goyigama and five Salāgama. Again, Rex Casinader's compilations

[18] Peebles, 1973, pp. 174–5, 187–202.

[19] I was greatly assisted by Mr Sena Jayasuriya's expertise in this field when identifying the caste of several individuals, regarding which I had no knowledge.

from amalgamated data on some mine owners, dealers and purchasers of graphite land reveal the percentage of Karāva as 39.[20] Among the leading graphite merchants in the 1900s were such Karāva as Hettiyakandagē Bastian and Gabriel Fernando, J. H. Arsekularatne, Lindamulagē John Clovis de Silva and the Wannacuwattewadugē Fernandos, besides several others referred to earlier in the chapter as leading arrack renters or merchants. Merennegē Arnolis Fernando (1850–1913), a carpenter and mining foreman who rose to be a leading mine owner, was fortunate or knowledgeable enough to invest in the Maha Bogala mine, one of the most consistently productive veins in twentieth-century Lanka. Indeed, after the graphite trade went into a decline from about the 1920s, only three mines remained in more-or-less continuous production: the Bogala group (including Karandawatte mine), the Kolongaha mines held by the Vidānalagē de Mels (Karāva) and the Kahatagaha mines owned by the Kotelawelas (Goyigama).[21]

Another measure of Karāva wealth is provided in the data on purchases of Crown land arising from Patrick Peebles' prodigious researches, which have generously been made available to this writer. Peebles focused his attention on the principal category of Crown land, that entitled 'waste land', and did not encompass business and urban allotments in his survey. Using the land sales registers in the period 1860–89, he collected data on 'all deeds sold above an arbitrary cut-off price of Rs. 500'. This was supplemented by the collection of data on all the 'waste land' purchases of those individuals who bought four or more allotments above Rs. 500.[22] One result was a list of 71 Sinhalese purchasers (excluding the de Croos family) who spent more than Rs. 1,000 on such investments in this period. Treating this list as a sample, I have compiled a caste breakdown of the acreages purchased and the prices paid (see table 9). The Karāva land buyers stand out. The picture is perhaps overweighted on the side of the Karāva. Apart from the private land that entered the market as a commodity, it does not take

[20] 1974a, pp. 11–16, 18–20. My analysis of the data in Wright's *T. Cent. Imp.* differs slightly from Casinader's because I have included the names of Amadoris Mendis, C. P. Seneviratne, S. C. Obeyesekere, Abraham de Mel and W. Joseph Fernando, who are mentioned in the text.

[21] Information communicated by Mr Rex Casinader.

[22] Peebles, 1973, pp. 245–6.

note of the waste land acquired from the Crown before 1860 or the stocks of land that were privately held before British rule. There is little doubt that the Goyigama aristocracy held a large share of the latter. Certainly, the *nindagam* (or chief's villages and lands) in the Kandyan districts were held by *radala* Goyigama families, who also had access to large areas of *dēvālagam* and *vihāragam* (temple land).

Another guide to landownership patterns, and one that is reflective of capital investments, is the analysis of ownership data in the plantation directories which form one part of that useful handbook and compendium known as Ferguson's *Ceylon Directory*. Though the plantation directories give an impression of precision which is spurious,[23] and need to be used with certain reservations (see appendix 1), they are nevertheless an invaluable source of information. Data has been gathered from these directories for the publication years 1871–2, 1880–1, 1890–1, 1901, 1906–7, 1917, and 1927, and the collation and analysis is still in progress. A handful of Karāva landowners can be spotted in the lists of principal Ceylonese plantation owners which I have compiled for the years 1871–2 and 1880–1, but the caste identity of many Sinhalese remains obscure, so that an adequate comparison cannot be presented.[24] It is a different story with the data for the years 1917 and 1927 because it has been possible to identify the caste of most of the leading plantation owners with reasonable certainty. The technique adopted was to use the arbitrary figure of 500 acres (effectively, 480 acres) as a demarcation line to derive a list of the principal plantation owners on the basis of plantation property *held* (as distinct from *cultivated*). These lists are being published elsewhere[25] and need not be reproduced here. Distillations of these lists in terms of the quantities held by each of the castes in 1917 and 1927 are presented here as tables 10 and 11. They buttress the findings that have been reported above. In 1917 there were one hundred and twenty-seven plantation

[23] Note the examples of inaccuracy referred to in Peebles, 1973, p. 264.

[24] These tables will be published eventually. The 'estate directories' reproduced in Peterson's *Ceylon Almanac* for 1868 and for 1870 provide another source that can be checked against those in Ferguson's compilations for the same years. In general, the entries in Peterson's work are fewer than those in Ferguson, but they include several entries that are not found in the latter.

[25] Table 4 in Roberts (ed.), 1977; and table 2 in Roberts 1979, (ed.), chap. 4.

proprietorships, comprising 78 per cent of the total number in the list, in Sinhalese hands.[26] About 51 per cent of these proprietorships were held by Karāva; and if one excludes those owners whose caste remained obscure (fifteen proprietorships or about 12 per cent) the Karāva percentage would rise to 58. The more meaningful column, however, is that depicting the extent of land under cultivation. Among the Sinhalese the holdings in Karāva hands amounted to 59 per cent; or nearly 67 per cent if one excludes the cultivated land held by the leading Sinhalese whose caste has not been ascertained. Perhaps the most consistently profitable and most lucrative of the plantation crops was tea. There were at least twenty-nine Ceylonese proprietorships controlling over 300 acres of tea at this stage. Of these, there were five who had over 650 acres devoted to tea. They were all Karāva. Again, there were seven Karāva, one Salāgama and one unknown (A. P. Fernando) among the nine Sinhalese recorded as planters with over 700 acres under rubber.

As would be expected, many of these individuals reappear in the 1927 figures, but there were several new entrants. There is the impression of expanding Goyigama interests with the Obeyesekeres, Senanayakes, Alice Kotelawela, Col. T. G. Jayewardene, M. G. Perera of Kitulgala, D. G. K. Jayakody and the de Silvas of 'Semidale' in the vanguard; while the Rajapakses (Tudor, A. E. and W. M.) and A. E. de Silva led the Salāgama wedge, just as they had done in 1917. Yet the Karāva interest seems to have been maintained: of the nineteen who held over 3,000 acres of plantation property, there were twelve Karāva, three Salāgama, two Goyigama, one Colombo Chetty with Goyigama marriage connections (Fred E. Abeyesundera of Galle) and one Eurasian of recent migrant origin (A. J. Vanderpoorten). If one excludes the 17,000 acres held by A. J. Vanderpoorten (including, as it does, a holding of 13,600 acres which may be a timber concession), typically, the four leading

[26] The initial work of the research assistants on the plantation directory for 1917 has yet to be cross-checked in the manner applied to the year 1927. It is probable that a few Burghers and Eurasians have been left out. For those readers who are unfamiliar with the distinction, it should be stressed that the terms 'Ceylonese' (Sri Lankan) and 'Sinhalese' are not synonymous. Sinhalese, Tamils, Moors, Burghers, Parsees and other communities are found within Sri Lanka or Ceylon.

plantation owners were Karāva: R. E. S. de Soysa (9,368 acres), E. C. de Fonseka (8,741 acres), Sir Henry L. de Mel (7,254 acres) and L. W. A. de Soysa (6,087 acres), with A. E. de Silva (5,486 acres) next in line. In percentage terms, the Karāva constituted 46 per cent of the Sinhalese proprietorships in the 1927 list, held 53 per cent of the plantation property and 56.8 per cent of the cultivated land.

These trends had been evident to contemporary observers as early as the third quarter of the nineteenth century and had contributed to the escalation of caste conflict, particularly between the Goyigama caste and the KSD castes acting individually or collectively. In referring to these rivalries in 1880, John Douglas, a highly-placed British official, remarked that on the western and southern seaboard 'what are regarded as the inferior castes . . . [had] outstripped their high-caste neighbours in the race for wealth and material prosperity'.[27] These developments also encouraged the successful Karāva to brag about their landed wealth. In rhetorical style the booklet entitled *The Kara-Goi Contest*, which was published in 1890, argued that the Goyigama had few 'capitalists' or 'extensive landowners', that the Sinhalese-owned estates were mostly held by persons from the KSD castes and that the 'Goia or paddy cultivator . . . all over the Island' was 'vassal' to the people of these castes. It added:

> Have we not bought almost all the property of the Kandyan gentlemen? . . . Must not Goias admit that the metropolis of our kings [i.e. Kandy] is now the property of the Karawes, who now with money in their right hand and a bottle of arrack in their left morally govern Goias! Could not this be affirmed of Kurunegalle, Kegalle, Gampola, Matale, Badulla and Nuwara Eliya.[28]

This aggrandisement hardly did credit to the substantial Goyigama stake in plantation land or *nindagam* property (chieftain's land). Nevertheless, there was a measure of truth in the claims, insofar as a large extent of land had been acquired by Karāva capitalists in the preceding half of the century.

The reference to urban property is of particular interest. It directs our attention to another area of investment to which

[27] 'Minute as to Village Tribunals', 28 June 1880, in *Sessional Paper XX of 1880*, in CO 54/528, fols. 179–80. [28] Dharmaratna, 1890, pp. 49–50; also see pp. 5, 44.

importance was attached. My analysis of the housing assessment registers for Colombo in 1927 and those for Kandy in 1872, 1891, 1911 and 1927 permits a verification of this particular claim about Karāva dominance. The preliminary findings indicate this boast to have been greatly exaggerated, because the Sinhalese share in urban property was much less than their share in the non-European sector of plantation property. As one might easily have anticipated, in the cosmopolitan arena of Colombo,[29] besides the Europeans and the corporate bodies, the Moors, Borahs, Parsees, Burghers, Ceylon Tamils and Indian businessmen held a substantial portion of the land. This was also true of Kandy, though Borahs and Parsees figure less prominently there. Considerable difficulties attended this analysis and readers are referred to the note accompanying table 13 for some explanations on this point. Table 13 amounts to a sample of the Colombo sample – with Rs. 5,000 being used as a means of creaming-off the principal non-corporate property holdings in non-European hands. The table presents a preliminary caste analysis of those proprietors who were deemed to be Sinhalese. Of the ninety-one whose caste was identified, the Karāva held 42 per cent of the assessed rateable value and constituted 32 per cent of the identified units.

An accidental by-product of the 1915 Sinhalese–Moor riots provides an instructive measure of urban capital assets at that stage. The British administration decided to extort riot compensation money from affluent Sinhalese through statutory measures. As part of this process, the Municipality of Colombo compiled estimates of the capital worth of the wealthy Sinhalese within the city. The estimates obviously included urban property holdings and business premises, but it remains unclear whether out-of-town assets held by these wealthy city residents were incorporated within these appraisals. There are other limitations.[30] For all that, it is a useful source. From the

[29] According to the census of 1921, only 41.7 per cent of the *males* in Colombo were Sinhalese. The Ceylon Tamils constituted 5.9 per cent; the 'Indian Tamils', i.e. mostly Indian immigrants of Tamil and Malayāli stock, constituted 20.2 per cent; the Ceylon and Indian Moors 16.7 per cent; the Burghers 4.8 per cent, and the rest 10.4 per cent. These are significant variations from the national figures.

[30] See notes to table 14.

list of about 452 names in five of the eight wards, those assessed at Rs. 40,000 and over, 90 in number, were disaggregated on caste lines. The results are shown in table 14. The Karāva stand out once more, the value of their assets adding up to nearly four million rupees and comprising 44.8 per cent of the estimated assets assigned to the seventy-three proprietorships whose owners' caste has been ascertained.

Wright's *Twentieth Century Impressions of Ceylon* provides another index to the caste composition of the Sinhalese elite during the early twentieth century, though its more useful service is the provision of biographical data embellished by vivid pictorial representation of the life-style favoured by the Sinhalese elites. The individuals listed therein must be regarded as a mere sample of these elites, a supplement to the information already detailed. From the 272 Sinhalese listed in this book, the caste of 248 was identified with reasonable certainty. Of these, 127 or 51.2 per cent were Goyigama, while 89 or 35.8 per cent were Karāva.[31] The higher proportions accruing to the former in this index can be attributed to the weight given to traditional familial status and the inclusion of several local notables from the outlying districts, among them a number of Kandyan headmen. Another reason for this shift in balance may have been the inclusion of a large number of individuals from the liberal professions.

This remark should not be read as a suggestion that the Karāva concentrated on entrepreneurship and capitalism to the neglect of educational channels of mobility. Their participation in the latter, too, was considerable, though they did not achieve the degree of dominance they secured in capitalist endeavours. The absence of caste information in the censuses prevents clear statistical support for this argument. However, impressionistic reviews of the lists of lawyers and doctors in the *Ceylon Directories* and the published lists of those who sat for the Cambridge Senior Examination in the period 1891–1906

[31] Details can be found in table 9 in Roberts (ed.), 1979, chap. 4. Since my original analysis in 1971–2 (see Roberts in *UCHC*, 1973c, p. 280), I have included those names listed in the appendix and located a handful of other Ceylonese names that were hidden away in various parts of this large book, or were inadvertently missed in the initial compilation. Note that families had to pay for entries in the *Twentieth Century Impressions* and that biases may have entered into the procedures leading to the composition of the book.

lead in this direction. Biographical data which I have gathered on a number of families lend further support. It is noticeable that the sons of many Karāva merchant princes and arrack renters preferred to enter the prestigious professions, to become plantation owners or both. It follows, too, that the wealth which the Karāva commanded must have been of material assistance in the acquisition of educational skills. It is evident that a number of Karāva youth were sent to England for professional training from the mid nineteenth century onwards, and a few even received their secondary schooling there. Of wider ramifications were the private schools which Karāva capitalists founded along the southwestern coast in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (see chapter 7).

Perhaps the most conclusive evidence of the large Karāva share in Western educational qualifications in comparative perspective is an indirect one: that arising from the British administration's creation of a seat in the Legislative Council which came to be known as the 'Educated Ceylonese' constituency. This electorate was largely composed of Sinhalese and Ceylon Tamils. It was demarcated by high educational qualifications.[32] It is significant that the Karāva were in a position to field a candidate, Dr H. Marcus Fernando, for the first elections in December 1911, as were the Ceylon Tamils; whereas the Goyigama-minded Goyigama did not consider themselves strong enough to do so and took the pragmatic course of supporting Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan's candidature in order to deny the Karāva this highly prized office.[33] They would have gathered previous and bitter experience of their weaknesses on this front during the election contests for certain seats in the Colombo Municipal Council. The 1890s and 1900s were marked by the increasing penetration of Karāva notables into the Municipal Council arena in Colombo, Galle and Kandy. On one occasion in 1900 it would seem that Chapman Dias (a Dias Bandaranaike) aspired to contest the seat for the Kotahena ward in Colombo, a ward in which the Obeyesekere and Bandaranaike families had long been resi-

[32] The Ceylon Tamils comprised as much as 36.4 per cent of the electorate, while the Sinhalese constituted 56.4 per cent. See table 3 in Roberts in *UCHC*, 1973c, p. 283. Cf. Jayasekera, 1970, p. 180 n; and *Ceylon Independent*, 23 Dec. 1910.

[33] See below, pp. 170, 178.

dent; but found that the support he had among the voters (limited by educational qualifications) was inadequate, so that he retired from the contest before the election, leaving Dr Solomon Fernando (Karāva) the victor.[34]

In overview, then, there is a wide range of information which establishes that a number of Karāva were in the vanguard of commercial and plantation capitalism and that the Karāva elite had hived off for themselves a substantial share of the prestigious occupations and capitalist roles held by Sinhalese. In comparison with their position in the 1820s, or even the 1850s, their share in the 1890s and 1900s seems to have grown considerably; and remained a growing one. Their economic interests and influence had also been extended spatially into the distant interior.

It will be evident that my detailed information has been limited to the period up to 1931. The advent of universal suffrage in that year set forces in motion which pared down Karāva influence and wealth over the long run, at least in relative terms. Yet mere impressions confirm that the Karāva remained an important segment in the prestigious occupations and within the intelligentsia during the 1950s and 1960s. And a number of Karāva were among the wealthiest Sinhalese and Ceylonese according to the impressions of several observers.[35] When Hans-Dieter Evers investigated the caste composition of the Sinhalese directors and managers of the principal private and state enterprises in 1961, he found that a majority were Karāva (see table 15).

Business organisation and entrepreneurship

In the absence of detailed studies of the structure and organisation of indigenous business concerns and plantations it is not possible to present anything more than impressionistic and cursory comments on the subject. These impressions suggest

[34] [Memorial of undersigned Low-Country Sinhalese], encl. 1 in Governor to Sec. of State, No. 138, 5 Apr. 1905, C O 54 series. Also see Labrooy, 1973, p. 420. Jayasekera notes that the Goyigama aristocracy tended to support Goyigama notables outside their inner circle, such as Charles Perera and the Jayewardene brothers, in these municipal contests; and maintains that the Goyigama interests fought 'a losing battle' (1970, pp. 175ff). [35] E.g. Ryan, 1953, pp. 106, 331, 336.

that the organisational forms adopted by individual Karāva enterprises did not, for the most part, differ markedly from those of other Sinhalese merchants and plantation owners; so that the discussion that follows draws upon their scanty information about Sinhalese business concerns in general.

This discussion can be set against the scholarly literature on various types of capitalist organisation. In previous chapters of this book reference has been made to indigenous enterprise as 'commercial capitalism' and 'plantation capitalism'. These constitute heuristic labels that describe the principal fields in which investments were made. However, within each field, and particularly within that of commercial capitalism, it is possible for capitalist concerns to be engaged in a network of economic activity which stamps a peculiar character on these concerns. Following Weber, three conceptual forms of capitalist enterprise have been identified: those associated with (i) 'adventurer capitalism', (ii) 'bazaar-type capitalism' and (iii) 'rational bourgeois capitalism'.

'Adventurer capitalism', also described sometimes as 'booty capitalism', refers to profit-seeking enterprise constructed upon the political framework and political devices, and oriented towards speculation. To Weber, speculation in government finance and contracts, tax farming, the farming of government offices and domains and the state monopolies and financial projects of princes typified this sort of enterprise; and was viewed as a form of speculative 'pariah capitalism'.[36]

'Bazaar-type capitalism' is not to be confused with the location of business concerns in market-places which are widely known in many parts of Asia as 'bazaars'. It refers to a structural type associated with pedlars, and is best exemplified in Clifford Geertz's description of the majority of trading concerns in the market town of Modjokuto in eastern central Java. These concerns are small enterprises, often lacking even permanent commercial sites, marginal in terms of capital deployed and profit gained. Their trading is hyper-individuated and relies on the sliding scale of prices associated with haggling. Their economic activities are dispersed into small commodity lines to

[36] Weber, 1965, pp. 18–21, 25–7, 82, 186, 271; *General Economic History*, 1927, pp. 334, 359; and *Ancient Judaism*, H. H. Gerth and Don Martindale (ed.), Glencoe, N.Y.: Free Press, 1952, p. 344. Also see Fox, 1973; and Morris, 1967, pp. 589–93.

spread risk, and are directed towards cutting themselves in on good deals and cornering markets for scarce goods. As such, each of these units attempts to maintain great liquidity rather than to build itself up through investments and incremental profit.[37]

Contrasting with both these forms of enterprise in its solidity, its on-going strength and its rational mode of organisation is the third ideal-type, that of the 'rational bourgeois' concern. Here the emphasis is on the establishment of a stable clientele and on scrupulous and honest economic dealings within the existing legal framework; and the economic goals are not those of a gambler, but rather those of a calculating machine. It is illustrated in Geertz's summary of the 'major elements' in a store at Modjokuto, which was in an intermediate position in the progressive line of growth between a bazaar economy and a 'firm-centred economy': namely, 'a permanent location, a full business day, somewhat more fixed prices, regular salesclerks, an adjustment of inventories to modern urban tastes, a more conscientious effort to carry out systematic bookkeeping-based planning, a more aggressive search for customers, and so on'.[38]

A variant version of bourgeois capitalism would be that offered by Marx. Marx too laid great emphasis on the rationality, an exploitative rationality, of capitalism. But his defining emphasis was on the mode of production, so that bourgeois capitalism refers to a mode of production in which the worker is separated from his tools and is himself a mere commodity in the market.[39] Merchants who distribute goods and serve as middlemen would therefore be categorised according to the system in which they are encapsulated. Those that draw their commodities from an economic system in which capitalist relations of production are dominant would be part of the bourgeois capitalist order, an exploitative but rational and progressive order. Those that draw their goods from independent artisans and guilds would be part of a pre-capitalist order.

At first glance those indigenous entrepreneurs in Sri Lanka who invested in the various tax farms in Dutch Ceylon and British Ceylon might seem to fall within the description of adventurer capitalists described above. The involvement of

[37] Geertz, 1963, pp. 30–47. [38] *Ibid.*, p. 59; and pp. 47–70.
[39] E.g. *Capital*, vol. III, Moscow: 1959, p. 32.

government headmen in these activities in Dutch times lends support to this view. These tax farms constituted economic fields that had been created by the fiscal structure of the government and could therefore be 'furrowed' and 'harvested' with official protection. But an uncritical extension of Weber's brief, jaundiced and Euro-centric remarks on pariah capitalism to the island context would be misleading. As noticed earlier, considerable organisational skills were called for on the part of arrack renters in the nineteenth century. Peebles' definitive view is unambiguous on this point:

> few Ceylonese possessed all the qualities demanded of renters: entrepreneurial skill, wealth enough to post sureties, the local authority to prevent illicit sales, and the boldness to deal on a face-to-face basis with the lordly Government Agent. A renter needed good working relationships with arrack producers, the cooperation of local officials, and the assistance of a large staff of tavernkeepers, carters and watchmen.[40]

Again, in British times bazaar-type traders and pedlars and numerous bazaar craftsmen were active in the interstices of the market economy. This is a ubiquitous form of economic activity. But such operators do not constitute the personnel who have provided much of the raw material for this chapter, though some familial concerns may have had their origins in such enterprises, especially in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Most of the contractors, sawmill owners, general merchants, specialist traders and brokers fall into the category of firms described by Geertz. Some of the smaller concerns may have relied on rudimentary bookkeeping and on family labour, but nevertheless maintained a permanent location and sought to secure a stable body of clients. A large number of these concerns had hired labour, albeit labour that may also have been kith and kin. Thus, in the 1870s the eight Sinhalese-owned sawmills that are listed in the mercantile directory had workforces with ten to twenty men, while the Panadura Richland Mills held by C. H. de Soysa had thirty men working under a 'conductor'; and the office photograph outside the premises of S. C. Fernando and Bros at Kandy presents a group of twenty-four men, nine of them seated.[41] By

[40] 1973, p. 184; see also p. 175.
[41] Ferguson's *Ceylon Directory*, 1875, pp. 673–4; and Roberts, 1975a, plate 15.

the 1900s there were a handful of Sinhalese processing, manufacturing or service concerns employing labour forces ranging from two hundred to seven hundred and fifty persons. Among those employing large labour forces were a ship chandler's firm, a furniture concern and graphite producers and traders. The majority of firms, however, had workforces of less than one hundred and fifty persons.[42]

Among the typical forms of Sinhalese business were (i) trading enterprises in the plantation districts which served as general merchants, dealers in rice and other foodstuffs, and (before 1890) as coffee dealers; and (ii) import–export firms located at Galle or Colombo. S. C. Fernando and Bros and P. W. Dias and Co. (both Karāva firms) are examples of the former.[43] The firm of Don Davith and Sons represents an example of the latter. A Karāva from Ahangama, A. W. P. Don Davith *Mudalāli* established a small import trade in foodstuffs at Galle in the year 1875. Within a short time he expanded his business to encompass rice imports from Calcutta and various categories of foodstuffs imported from elsewhere in the world. In return he exported coconut oil. By 1907 it was claimed that he imported 600,000 bags of rice and 40,000 bags of horse-food every year. Besides the central office premises at Galle, his firm had a coconut-oil yard (where oil was machine-processed), a large store and branch offices at Colombo, Calcutta and Co-canada. A Buddhist philanthropist, A. W. P. Don Davith de Silva, was prone to generosity and conspicuous consumption, and his enterprise went into financial decline at a subsequent date.[44]

Information relating to other Sinhalese business enterprises reveals that similar instances of a rapid rise and fall were not uncommon, though the more usual story is that of failure in the second or third generation, sometimes because of the inefficiency or prodigality of a spoilt son. One of the causal forces is embodied in the folk-saying: 'he made his fortune in Sinhalese, and dissipated it in English'. In this sense, Westernisation ran in contradiction to economic success. It should be recalled, however, that conspicuous consumption and status-accumulation were traditional and pre-capitalist norms. The

[42] See Roberts, 1974c, pp. 15–19.

[43] Shelton C. Fernando, *c.* 1969; and *T. Cent. Imp.*, 1907, p. 797.

[44] *T. Cent. Imp.*, 1907, pp. 486–9; and information from Miss Norah Roberts.

Westernised life-style pursued so conspicuously by numerous Sinhalese in British times was merely a vehicle for the expression of these norms.[45]

In contrast, at the other end of this axis, one can cite several entrepreneurs who achieved great success in the expansion and diversification of their economic activities. Jeronis Pieris and the Warusahännädigē de Soysas are not the only examples. Mututantrigē Simon Fernando Sri Chandrasekera successfully combined the control of a sawmill with coopering, timber contracting, graphite mining and making occasional incursions into toll and arrack renting. Several arrack renters became pioneer coffee, coconut or rubber planters and opened up new plantations; while other renters dabbled in the mining of graphite. Indeed, the manner in which the Sinhalese capitalists secured a dominant role in the graphite industry in the face of European competition is a significant feature of the island's economic history. Neither Septimus Morgan's explorations in Sri Lanka in 1866 nor subsequent mining probes by representatives of the Morgan Crucible Company of Battersea proved fruitful.[46] While there were two or three European-owned graphite mines which survived for some time, the majority of their graphite-mining ventures were financial disasters because of their failure to strike good veins and their tendency to over-capitalise through resort to mechanisation. In contrast, the Sinhalese were content to rely on joint-stock methods of labour organisation borrowed from the gem industry during their early explorations, and thereafter to operate open-cast mines wherever possible. As the veins were followed deeper into the earth, they relied on windlasses or winches that were operated manually or with animal power, and only in a few mines was steam-powered machinery adopted for pumping and haulage operations.[47] At certain stages, especially during the Boer War, the profits in the industry for producers and graphite brokers were enormous. Around 1903 Vidānalagē Jacob de Mel is reported to have earned a net return of £2,000 per annum over eleven years from one of his mines.[48]

[45] See Roberts, 1975b, pp. 45–51. Also see below, pp. 221–4.

[46] Richard Bennett, *Battersea Works 1856–1956*, London: Morgan Crucible Co. Ltd, 1956, pp. 27–8; and *Tropical Agriculturalist*, Mar. 1901, p. 625. Also see Casinader, 1974a.

[47] Casinader, 1974b.

[48] John Ferguson, 1903, p. cxv.

Again, the emerging Sinhalese bourgeoisie was quick to adopt the plantation system as a means of cultivating cash crops. Whether regarded in Weberian or Marxist terms, the generality of indigenous plantations represented a form of organisation that belonged to the bourgeois order. In 1856 a British district officer in Kandy remarked specifically on the manner in which some local residents were hiring immigrant labour, so as to develop their chena lands with coffee trees nurtured on the lines adopted in European plantations.[49] However, the largest Sinhalese investments were in coconut plantations. Coconut could provide returns without the rigorous supervision required on coffee, tea and rubber plantations. Many Sinhalese plantation owners were absentee-landlords who resided in urban centres and visited their plantations periodically, leaving daily operations to an estate manager. While this could support inefficient management, it was no bar to rationally organised commodity production as long as the managers and labourers were experienced hands. The rapid dissemination of information in commercial circles permitted the borrowing of improved cultivation methods that had been perfected in the centres of innovation. The rapidity with which specific plantations switched from cinnamon cultivation to coconut cultivation, and sometimes back again, during the period from 1871 to 1891, suggests that Ceylonese plantation owners were attentive to market trends. And in the 1900s there were some Sinhalese entrepreneurs who were ready to uproot their tea bushes and grow rubber in order to ride the rubber booms.[50] A remarkable instance of forethought was provided by Jeronis Pieris in the 1870s when he got rid of most of his coffee plantations and invested in coconut properties. When the coffee industry collapsed in the 1880s in the face of a leaf disease, he was not severely affected. The Warusahännädigē de Soysas, too, had diversified their investments sufficiently to survive the major economic depression of the 1880s, in contrast to numerous European coffee planters and a handful of Ceylonese who had placed all their eggs in one basket.

49 Provincial Report from the Central Province by Rawdon Power, 24 Apr. 1856, in *Ceylon Times*, 2 May 1856.

50 E.g. *T. Cent. Imp.*, 1907, pp. 600–2; and personal communication from Dr Gerald Peiris.

It is instructive in this regard to record the homilies which Jeronis de Soysa had impressed upon his family ayurvedic physician (*vedarāla*) and retainer: among them, the advice that the *vedarāla* should not demand fees from the very poor who could not afford to pay, and the observation that Jeronis de Soysa had not purchased a horse and carriage until he was able to possess a very good pair of horses and a costly carriage. Paraphrased, one of the themes in this series of homilies contended that a person should invest at a new level when he was in a position to invest in the best.[51]

Even more revealing is the information on the life-style and business practice of a Goyigama Buddhist entrepreneur named CaṅdaUda Aratchigē Odiris de Silva (*c.*1860–1928), who started out as a small retail merchant at Matara and by 1914 owned a store, a dairy and eighteen coconut-oil presses operated by animal power (i.e. *chekkhoes*), which he replaced in 1918 with a 36 hp mill (later 66 hp). He believed strongly that a businessman should not cheat and should stand by his word. The motto imprinted on a brass plate in his shop read:

> The courageous one would receive any treasure he aspires to. The most rare (achievement of) Buddhahood was obtained through courageousness. He who aspires to wealth will end up being a wealthy man, *if* he (pursues his aspirations) without evil behaviour and laziness, and without wasting time or wealth, and (if he) engages himself in one single trade, understanding its real nature.[52]

It was his practice to rise around 3 or 4 o'clock each morning and finish his working day at about 3.00 p.m. And he made it a point to keep track of his working capital every day, maintaining a stock account book for the purpose. He read Buddhist *baṇa pot* (books of sermons) every evening and adhered to a

[51] Related by Brumphy Vedamahatmaya (who lived to be ninety-four) to one of Jeronis' grandsons (Sir Wilfred de Soysa's reminiscences to Sunimal Fernando, 1963).

[52] Recited to me by his son, Mr C. A. Harischandra, 29 Apr. 1975. I am grateful to Mr K. N. O. Dharmadasa for translating this passage. Cf. the passage from the *Dīgha Nikāya* (vol. III, p. 188) quoted by Thapar, 1961: 'The wise and moral man shines like a fire on a hilltop, making money like the bee which does not hurt the flower. Such a man makes his pile like the anthill, gradually. The man grown wealthy thus can help his family and firmly bind his friends to himself. He should divide his money into four parts: on one part he should live, with two expand his trade, and the fourth he should save against a rainy day.'

strict vegetarian and teetotal diet. Predictably, he was also a believer in regular philanthropic largesse and was a founding father of Rahula College, a Buddhist school at Matara. It should be noted that C. A. Odiris de Silva was not an idiosyncratic type. He himself regarded the business organisation of the Karāva merchant, K. C. Juanis Appu of Galle, as a model for emulation, and my collection of biographical information suggests that there were other entrepreneurs of the same school.[53]

Not only does C. A. Odiris de Silva's career represent a striking contrast to that of Don Davith de Silva, it reads like a page from Weber's *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.* It confirms the influence of the ascetic tradition within the Buddhist revivalist movement which has been described by such scholars as Michael Ames and Gananath Obeyesekere. Buddhist revivalism was also part of a wider cultural awakening marked by a hostile reaction against the degree to which Western ways had been adopted by the Sinhalese. It reflected and encouraged the forces of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism.[54] Ananda Wickremeratne has revealed how the Buddhist traders in the late nineteenth century 'subtly exploited the [revivalist] movement to air certain economic grievances' and how the newspaper run by the Buddhist Theosophical Society constantly argued that it was 'the business' of the Ceylonese and Sinhala Buddhists 'to consider ways of accumulating capital'.[55] This was not only a reflection of the bourgeois class interests of Buddhist entrepreneurs, but also the product of a perception which saw economic strength as an instrument of Buddhist revitalisation. Therefore, one cannot agree with Obeyesekere when he insists that the ascetic, this-worldly involvement of Buddhist activists lacked an economic orientation and was solely socio-political in nature. Nor was this economic emphasis solely a consequence of new class formations, colonial pressures and the permeation of Protestant values. It had roots in the Buddhist tradition. C. A. Odiris de Silva consciously

[53] Interview with Mr C. A. Harischandra, 29 Apr. 1975. Mr Harischandra (b. 1911) is the proprietor and director of Harischandra Mills. *Re* Juanis de Silva, see *T. Cent. Imp.*, 1907, pp. 762–4.

[54] See Roberts (ed.), 1977, pp. lxxiii–lxxv, lxxxix–xciv; Obeyesekere, 1970, pp. 52–8; 1975, pp. 252–7; and Ames, 1963.

[55] 1969, pp. 136–9.

modelled himself on the royal financiers and merchants of Asoka's day, the *sitānan* of the Mauryan Empire.[56]

At first sight this information might seem relevant to the debates that have developed around Weber's contentions that the Indian religions have been antithetical to the development of modern capitalism and to all forms of 'rational purposive activity'.[57] However, Weber's survey of Asian religions was part of a programme of global comparisons which was meant to illuminate his study of rationality and, in particular, his argument that the Protestant ethic assisted the growth of economic rationality (namely the systematic calculation of effective means to achieve given material ends).[58] In this light the presence of a powerful merchant class in the Mauryan Empire,[59] or numerous examples of successful Buddhist entrepreneurs in Sri Lanka,[60] does not invalidate Weber's argument because it is pitched at a different level of abstraction. On the other hand, the material that has been presented above seems to support the criticisms that have been levelled against Weber's contention that 'pariah capitalism', which he associated with adventurers and bazaar-type capitalists, was not economically rational.[61] It is a fair assumption that several of the successful entrepreneurial family firms that have figured in the pages of this book originated as small bazaar concerns, or as tax farmers and grain-tax renters in Dutch and British times. On this reckoning, some so-called 'pariah capitalists' in Sri Lanka showed a capacity to evolve into firm-type concerns of a rational bourgeois type.[62] Expansion in their scale of commercial operations, or investment in plantations, the graphite industry or light manufacturing industries, did not depend upon the permeation of a Protestant ethic so much as a suitable institutional order, and, as we shall argue now for the

[56] Interview with Mr C. A. Harischandra, 29 Apr. 1975. Also, Bechert, 1973, pp. 88–9.

[57] See Weber, 1958; *The Religion of China*, New York: Free Press, 1951, esp. chaps. V, VI and VIII; and *The Sociology of Religion*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1963, pp. 266–9. For critical comments on Weber's analysis of the Hindu religion and traditionalism, see Morris, 1967; and Singer, 1972.

[58] For useful explanations, see Sprinzak, 1972; Warner, 1970; Birnbaum, 1953; Roth, 1971; and Bendix, 1966.

[59] See Kosambi, 1956, pp. 155–75, 212–25; and 1952, pp. 180–213; and Thapar, 1961, pp. 75–86, 214–15.

[60] Also note the comments in chap. 8, pp. 242–4.

[61] Fox, 1973; and Mines, 1973.

[62] For some qualifications, see pp. 289–90.

Karāva, sociological features which tended to circulate benefits along caste-based networks and to promote economic spiralism within the Karāva caste.

Spiralism and pooling through Karāva caste networks

Arising from the collective identity and sentiments of caste loyalty common to most Sinhalese castes during the period under review,[63] it appears that the Karāva entrepreneurs favoured other Karāva in their recruitment policies. In a *Ceylon Observer* of the year 1870 it was noted that Jeronis de Soysa made it a point to select 'young men . . . from his native village' as his plantation managers;[64] and this is largely supported by the information in the plantation directories and in Sir Wilfred de Soysa's reminiscences. It is known that some of his managers rose to be successful capitalists in their own right. It can be safely assumed that this process occurred with other Karāva capitalists as well, with the managerial staff gaining both useful experience and some capital which was put to use later. It can further be conjectured that the majority of managers, tavern-keepers and other assistants were of Karāva stock, though a few were not (e.g. Don Spater Senanayake and James Senanayake are reputed to have been such managers at one time in their careers).[65] Therefore, one perceives here multiple opportunities for social mobility along caste channels, that is, a process of spiralism.

In these nepotic tendencies it is unlikely that the Karāva were unique among the caste elites of the Dutch and British periods. But this is precisely where their early successes and their ability to pre-empt a large share of the entrepreneurial opportunities by the mid-nineteenth century worked to their

[63] See chap. 7. [64] *Ceylon Observer*, 23 Apr. 1870.

[65] The former worked under John Clovis de Silva as a graphite 'mine' manager, and James Senanayake was with the de Soysas, according to unverified folklore that I have picked up. Among other managers associated with the de Soysas at some stage in the nineteenth century were the following: John James, H. Jeronis Pieris, W. Harmanis (de) Soysa, Migel (de) Soysa, Francisco and Samuel Soysa, Don Bastian Silva (possibly A. H. D. B. de Silva), Carolis Silva, Bastian Cooray, Francisco and Louis Perera, Juan Mendis, Jayasuriya Arachchigē Don Hendrick alias Appusingho Kankanama, Thanapathigē Haramanis de Silva and J. W. Samaraweera. Also see the names of the 'Resident Superintendents' on the plantations held by the leading Karāva owners in plantation directories of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

advantage. Any spiralistic snowballing process in subsequent decades would have produced more *nouveaux riches* among the Karāva than among the other castes.

This was not all. The occupational diversification which was a marked feature among the Karāva *in pre-British times* must have worked to their advantage in multiplying the opportunities for social mobility. Admittedly, occupational diversification in this epoch was not confined to the Karāva and extended to the coastal residents in general, among them the Salāgama. However, it is to be suspected that the importance attached to cinnamon peeling by the colonial powers restricted the opportunities available to the Salāgama for other economic activities on a full-time basis.[66] The information that has been assembled in chapters two, three and four would have revealed that the Karāva were engaged in a wide range of economic activity in the eighteenth century, on both a full-time and a part-time basis. Their ranks included boat builders, makers of furniture, other artisans, fishermen, owners of fishing boats and nets, distillers of toddy and arrack, renters of government tax farms, owners of coconut and paddy land, producers of lime, coir and various products of the coconut tree, female lacemakers, a few schoolteachers and ayurvedic physicians, domestic servants, labourers, contractors, pedlars and merchants. This range of economic activity was not only a source of economic strength, but involved links which acted in a centripetal manner to maintain caste cohesion and contribute towards on-going economic advances for families within the caste.

In this view the process resembles that of the pooling process described by Marshall Sahlins in connection with the domestic mode of production associated with a household economy:

> The domestic segregation constructed into production and property is completed by an inner-directed circulation of the household product. An inevitable consequence of production at once specialized by sex and oriented to collective use, this centripetal movement of goods differentiates the household economy from the world even as it reiterates the group's internal solidarity . . . Pooling abolishes the differentiation of the parts in favor of the coherence of the whole; it is the contributing activity of a group. On the other hand, the household is thereby distinguished forever from others of its kind.[67]

[66] Cf. above, pp. 53–4, 59, 90–1.   [67] 1974, p. 94.

It is not suggested that the solidarity of the Karāva was on a par with that of the household. What is significant in this conceptualisation is the emphasis on the inward centripetal direction of goods, and the reciprocities within the unit arising from role segregation. In somewhat similar manner, in pre-British times and in the early nineteenth century, a Karāva entrepreneur who required specialist services and sub-contractors in support of some economic venture could, if he so wished, locate *most* of these ancillary services within the Karāva caste. Subsidiary payments and profits would therefore be retained within the Karāva 'beachhead' and would not flow out to other communities. Contrast the position of an influential Goyigama who was constructing a manor house or engaged in some entrepreneurial activity: while he could effect some economy through political mechanisms and the services associated with traditional obligations, he would probably have to call upon the services of a number of non-Goyigama personnel.[68] Where available, profits would be partially or wholly channelled outside the caste. In this sense, therefore, the diversity of occupations taken up by the Karāva in the past gave a certain measure of economic autonomy to their population concentrations along various parts of the southwestern coast. However, this was not the autonomy of self-sufficiency in food. Adequate home-grown supplies of rice and *kurakkan* seem to have been precisely what most of the Karāva villages lacked.[69] But these deficiencies could be made up through the sale of such commodities as arrack, dried fish, furniture, coir rope and mats. And in doing so, most Karāva villages probably did not need to depend on Moorish traders, but could rely on their own merchants. By the eighteenth century, certainly, there were a few Karāva trading communities in the Kandyan country who could provide the local connections for economic activity in the deep interior.[70] It is to be suspected that similar outposts were maintained along the Indian coast.

Therefore, such autonomy as was secured by particular concentrations of Karāva was the product of occupational diversification and specialisation, and a process of economic linkage in competitive contractual terms which tended to circulate

[68] Note the implications of the quotations, above, p. 54.

[69] See above, p. 48. [70] See above, p. 85.

benefits within the caste and to pool the economic activity of individual economic units, whether those ran on capitalist or pre-capitalist lines. These features in their turn contributed towards the cohesion of the caste. Such caste solidarity was not the solidarity of homogeneous units. In pre-British times the influence of the *rājakāriya* system and the traditional modes of social organisation, as we saw, emphasised certain intracaste divisions. Both in these times and the succeeding era of capitalism under British domination, the economic mechanisms were marked by 'redistributive' principles rather than those of distributive 'reciprocity'. That is, to follow Karl Polanyi's conceptualisation, the exchanges among people did not rest upon principles of reciprocity supportive of an egalitarian social structure. Rather they followed the lines of social gradation (i.e. either the internal hierarchy or internal stratification) and supported the status and power of the elite.[71]

It is significant that Polanyi feels that redistribution 'is dependent upon some measure of centricity' in the society under consideration; and Harvey argues that it characteristically involves 'a flow of goods into and out of some centre', usually in support of the activities of an elite.[72] It is for this reason that redistribution is regarded as a mode of integration which buttresses the centralised structures that have created it. In operating within such a setting, therefore, the pooling networks among the Karāva must have assisted the integration of the caste. The question of Karāva group solidarity is the subject of chapter seven. What needs emphasis here is the manner in which the generation of new opportunities by members of the caste tended to flow to other Karāva, so that the distributive gains were mostly retained within caste walls, and promoted the emergence of yet more elite families.

[71] 1968, pp. 149ff; 1944, pp. 47–53 and 56; and Harvey, 1973, pp. 206–15 and 274ff. Thus, 'reciprocity is exclusively associated with egalitarian social structures', while redistribution could 'exist in either rank or stratified social structures' (Harvey, 1973, p. 206). Indeed, Polanyi stressed that feudalism involved a system of redistribution (1944, p. 52).

[72] Polanyi, 1968, p. 149; and Harvey, 1973, p. 209. Also see Morton Fried, *The Evolution of Political Society*, New York: 1967.

6

Social competition, caste conflict and manifestations of Karāva power

The previous chapter confirmed that in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries a substantial proportion of the Sinhalese rich and the Sinhalese in prestigious positions were drawn from the Karāva caste. While their relative share was comparatively large, it will be evident that the number of Karāva who used the avenues of social mobility to advantage were relatively few. One can, on the evidence presented so far, speak only of 'the rise of a Karāva elite' rather than the 'rise of the Karāva'.

This reconstruction has now brought us to a junction where the story takes two directions: one seeks to explain how and why such a successful elite emerged from within the Karāva caste rather than other castes. This is our primary interest. But first we must look at the social and political struggles of the Karāva under the inspiration of their emerging elite families or older headmen families. These families found that their social and ritual status was not congruent with their economic power. Taking advantage of the loosening of caste-regulated restrictions on life-style and the relaxations in caste-regulated administrative practice during British times, they set out to improve their social station and that of the Karāva caste as a whole. This raises questions regarding the degree to which these elite families were responding to the sentiments of the Karāva people, and whether one is justified in considering the Karāva to have possessed a sense of community *before* the Karāva elite developed into an articulate force. These are questions that have been hotly debated with regard to upwardly mobile castes in India during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In taking this direction, therefore, we will survey some of the literature on the subject relating to India and analyse the data on the Karāva in the light of this survey.

The present chapter and chapter seven take us along the second of these roads. This choice is dictated by the fact that a considerable amount of the information which is contained within these chapters is germane to one's understanding of the Karāva people (both elite and non-elite), their structural position, the dialectics of social interaction arising from this structural position and their motivations. In other words, in detailing the social and political behaviour of the Karāva and the factors that supported their collective identity, chapters six and seven help us to bring out the factors that were responsible for the emergence of a Karāva elite. That will be the subject of chapters eight and nine, with the latter constituting the concluding chapter of this book.

Introduction

The economic advances of a segment of the Karāva caste during the British period, as we saw, were especially striking. These gains were at variance with the status accorded to the Karāva in terms of the notions of social distance embodied in the Sinhalese caste system. In brief, one found a situation of status inconsistency.[1] While this had been true of the eighteenth century as well, it was much more marked during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Whatever the privileges and resources the Karāva had gathered to themselves in Portuguese and Dutch times, these seem to have been limited in degree and highly localised in their spread, while the prestigious public symbols (e.g. the use of palanquins) appear to have been restricted to the Karāva *mudaliyar* families. By the mid-nineteenth century, as we shall soon see, many of these restrictions had been dissolved and the Karāva elite families were able to bend their energies in a wider regional and more open juridical setting. The number of Karāva acquiring wealth and education could not be easily accommodated within the existing framework. The wealth and other resources accumulated by some families were of a princely order. Persisting discrimination and reminders of their traditional status were keenly resented. One therefore finds the Karāva elite exerting

[1] Peebles, 1973; pp. 306–67. See also below, pp. 165, 180, 184.

prodigious efforts to bring their caste ranking, social status and political influence into line with their economic weight.

Social status was not solely dependent on the norms of caste and caste-related social distance. It had always been influenced by the differential control of resources, access to positions of authority and legitimation by the state. These continued to influence the scales of prestige in British times. But so did Westernised criteria of status and prestige come into increasing play as the British ruling elite's values and life-style were treated as models for emulation, and as the older sanctions regulating forms of dress were gradually eroded. It was in this mixed vein that the status battle was entered upon. The Goyigama elite was not disposed to surrender its positions of advantage and its widely acknowledged caste primacy. Therefore, the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were marked by an escalation in the conflict between the Goyigama and Karāva castes. This chapter will be concerned with a description of some of these engagements against a background which involves the Salāgama and Durāva castes as well.

It would be erroneous to regard the extension of the capitalist mode of production in British times as the root of this social competition. It would be equally erroneous to treat it as a purely elite encounter, far removed from the concerns of the 'simple villager'. As indicated in previous chapters, this competition was noticeable in the eighteenth century as well and had deep social roots in the villages along the southwestern coast. Both the longstanding nature and the structural roots of caste conflict are reflected in the manner in which such rivalries penetrated the organisation of Buddhism and generated some fundamental changes in its traditional structure. It is with a summary of Kitsiri Malalgoda's account of these developments that this chapter can most fruitfully begin.

Caste rivalry and the genesis of new Buddhist fraternities

In becoming a world religion, Buddhism had accommodated itself to its social surroundings.[2] In Sri Lanka from early on this adaptation had included a recognition of caste distinctions

[2] This section is largely based on Malalgoda, 1976.

within the Buddhist monastic Order (the Sangha). For the most part, the recruitment of monks in medieval times was confined to the ranks of the Goyigama. During the reformist zeal of the eighteenth-century Buddhist revival under Välivita Saranankara (1698–1778) a number of non-Goyigama from the Low-Country became Saranankara's pupils and a few even received *upasampadā* (higher ordination). But this tendency was soon arrested. So was the practice of having *upasampadā* ceremonies at provincial centres, a practice that commenced with the delegation of Siamese monks who restored the higher ordination in 1753. By royal decree in 1765 the *upasampadā* ceremonies were confined to Kandy. This act of centralisation consolidated the old habit of Goyigama caste exclusiveness in the Buddhist Sangha. But it was, now, much more difficult to sustain. For one thing, the interest of several non-Goyigama people had been awakened by the reformist enthusiasm of the revival. For another, the policy of exclusion, in the last resort, depended on the sanctions exercised by the Sinhalese monarchy (though the numerical strength of the Goyigama was another supportive factor). Yet, ever since the political division of the island in the 1590s, the sanctions which the Kandyan kings could exercise over the religious order in the Low-Country had been tenuous. Thirdly, as we have seen, the KSD castes had utilised the administrative structures of the colonial powers and the restricted commercial opportunities to carve out firmer bases of power for themselves by the eighteenth century. Having thus improved their position and garnered a few privileges for themselves, the leading members of these castes sought to extend their privileges and to penetrate Goyigama monopolies in a number of arenas. In such a context the Goyigama monopoly of the order of *bhikkhus* could not remain sacrosanct.

The extension of competition within the temporal arena to that of the spiritual was inherent in the social setting of the Maritime Provinces. Following the expropriation of monastic lands in these districts in Portuguese times, the Buddhist order had fallen back on the resources of the laity. 'The monks in the low country had to depend more on their piety and learning to command social esteem, in contrast to their counterparts in Kandy, who already possessed it by virtue of their family

connections and monastic wealth.' In consequence, the Low-Country Buddhist monks appear to have been less conservative and more responsive to new social demands among the laity. It is probable that, as elsewhere in Asia, close contact with Christian organisational forms and Christian missionary effort stimulated similar organisational adaptations and an emphasis on voluntary self-help among the Buddhists in the Low-Country.[3] Though a majority of monks in the eighteenth century were from the Goyigama caste, a number of non-Goyigama *sāmaṇēras* had been admitted to the order and a handful of these *sāmaṇēras* succeeded in receiving higher ordination during the height of the eighteenth-century revival in the Kandyan territory. In closing the doors in 1765 to further acts of higher ordination among the non-Goyigama, therefore, the Buddhist Establishment in Kandy was not only affirming the superiority of the Goyigama people, but also blocking the personal ambitions of non-Goyigama *sāmaṇēras* in the Low-Country. It was difficult to marshal theoretical justification for this policy. Indeed, the Buddhist canonical works provided ready-made arguments for dissenting action against such caste exclusiveness. A protest movement emerged quickly in the Low-Country and eventually resulted in the segmentation of the Buddhist Sangha into several fraternities (*nikāyas*) and sub-fraternities.

In the teeth of protests from Kandy, some non-Goyigama monks and their lay supporters organised *upasampadā* ceremonies within the Low-Country, at Totagamu Vihare in 1772 and at Tangalle in 1798. They desired greater legitimacy however. Since the Kandyan Establishment remained obdurate, the obvious answer was the circumventing act of higher ordination in Burma or Siam, Buddhist countries which had served as banks of spiritual restoration on several occasions in the Sinhalese past. The wealth of the KSD headmen provided the necessary lubricant for this course and the supersession of the Dutch rulers by the British in 1795–6 appears to have provided the final catalyst. One after another, between 1799 and 1813, no less than five parties of monks went to Burma, received *upasampadā* and returned to Sri Lanka 'with authentic and independent

[3] Malalgoda, 1973; 1974, pp. 93–4; and personal communication from Dr Robin Jeffrey (Jan. 1979).

lines of ordination'. The first group (1799–1803) was a Salāgama enterprise led by Ambagahapitiyē Nānavimala from a temple at Welitara. The others were: a Salāgama party led by Kapugama Dhammakkhandha from a temple at Dadälla near Galle (1807–9); a Karāva party (1807–10) led by Kataluvē Gunaratana Tissa; a Durāva party (1807–13) led by Attudavē Dhammarakkhita; and a Salāgama party (?–1811) led by Bogahapitiyē Dhammajoti.[4]

Herein, in these five ventures, one had the birth of a new Buddhist fraternity, since known as the Amarapura *Nikāya*. Containing five separate lines of pupillary succession, this fraternity was always a loose federation rather than a centralised and unified organisation. The divisions within the *Nikāya* were broadly in line with caste and intracaste divisions. While the sub-fraternities 'experienced considerable interaction, and at times even worked in close collaboration with one another', they also 'maintained their separate identities'. When the Salāgama monks secured a stamp of approval from the British government through an Act of Appointment in 1825 which recognised Ambagahapitiyē Nanavimala as their chief monk, the Durāva and Karāva monks got together and sought similar 'legitimacy' for their nominee. In doing so they made no secret of their belief in the caste inferiority of the Salāgama. As Malalgoda observes: 'The Karāvas and Durāvas were hardly less keen than the Salāgamas to acquire the coveted Goyigama privileges; yet they were not keen to do so under Salāgama leadership.'[5] The Durāva branch came to be known as the Dhammarakkhitavamsa fraternity. It was perhaps the smallest of the sub-fraternities and had its main centres at Devundara near Matara and Mīripänna near Galle. The Karāva branch was sometimes described as the Rāmanya fraternity, but is better known as the Kalyānivamsa fraternity. Its original centre was Dodandūwa near Galle, but the Karāva Buddhist centres of strength gradually spread up the coast to such localities as Kalutara and Panadura.

These caste divisions did not prevent these fraternities and sub-fraternities from attracting devotees from outside their

[4] Malalgoda, 1976, pp. 87–105, 143, 147, 151n; and Raghavan, 1961, p. 137.

[5] 1976, pp. 144–8, 97, 99. He adds: 'Indeed, if compelled to choose they rather preferred the authority of the Goyigamas to that of the Salāgama'.

particular castes. Nor was the recruitment of monks caste-watertight. Wahumpura, Goyigama and other monks appear to have joined these fraternities. One branch of the Amarapura *Nikāya*, founded by Bogahapitiyē Dhammajoti, concentrated its activities in the Kandyan districts and recruited many Goyigama monks. The presence of an alternative encouraged dissident elements in the Siyam *Nikāya* (invariably Goyigama monks) to break away and join one or the other branches of the Amarapura *Nikāya*. The heterogeneity of the latter in the Low-Country areas inevitably encouraged further segmentation. Some of the Goyigama monks from the Siyam *Nikāya* who had joined that of the Amarapura grew disillusioned with the doctrinal controversies raging within that order. In the early 1860s two separate parties of monks under the leadership of Aṁbagahavattē Saranankara and Puvakdandavē travelled to Burma and received *upasampadā*. Back in Sri Lanka, these two branches coalesced and the consecration of a *sīmā* at Mahamodara in Galle on 11 June 1864 can be viewed as the birth of the Rāmanya *Nikāya*.

The original five parties that journeyed to Burma between 1799 and 1813 usually included a handful of lay devotees. And behind them, as I have noted before, were influential KSD notables: for instance, such headmen as Haljōti Dines de Zoysa Jayatilake Siriwardena and Adrian de Abrew Rajapakse. Such support was an expression of lay religiosity, and an outgrowth from Saranankara's reformist movement. But it was also more. It was a product of the developing caste rivalry within Sinhalese society. The KSD *sāmaṇēras* of the eighteenth century were linked by kinship and patronage networks to some of the leading men of their castes. 'And since the status of the patrons was bound to be enhanced by the status of their clients, it soon became incumbent on these headmen to ensure the high status of their clients. Helping them to obtain higher ordination was a primary step in ensuring their high status in the religious sphere.'[6] In effect, the new lines of pupillary succession were instruments in the status struggle with which this chapter is concerned. A subsequent (1864) description of the career of that ambitious Salāgama wheeler-dealer, Kapugama

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 97. Also pp. 87–8, 91–2, 98, 102, 167.

Dhammakkanda alias George Nadoris de Silva, explicitly states that the object of his enterprise in receiving higher ordination in Burma, building a two-storey dwelling near his Dadälla temple in a Burmese architectural style and gilding the spire of the dagoba as favoured in Burma, was 'to raise the status of his caste among the other inhabitants of Ceylon'.[7]

For this reason, the new fraternities and sub-fraternities derived their energy from within themselves and were not reliant on state support. As Kitsiri Malalgoda has stressed, these autonomous monastic fraternities pursued paths of voluntary self-help in the protection and promotion of Buddhism. He sees this as a departure from previous revitalisation movements in Sinhalese Buddhism, including that in the Kandyan Kingdom in the eighteenth century. These had drawn substantially upon state help to achieve their goals. In stark contrast the new fraternities came into confrontation with the state. The Amarapura *Nikāya* adopted as its *raison d'être* the protest against the royal decree relating to caste exclusivism.[8] And later on in the nineteenth century, the new fraternities were among the vanguard regiments of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism ranged in opposition to the British government and the Christian missions.

In the light of the information conveyed in previous chapters, this summary of Malalgoda's findings enables one to formulate an argument of some significance: the caste splits within the Buddhist Sangha and the revitalisation of Buddhist doctrine generated by the pressures of the KSD castes represent a dialectical force arising from the tension between two contradictory tendencies within these castes – opposing tendencies which were rooted in their immigrant origins and their socio-structural situation within the Sinhalese polity, contradictions which ran implicitly through our description in chapters three and four, and which need to be clarified and emphasised here. On the one hand, one can perceive a tendency among these immigrant communities to be integrated and incorporated within the Sinhalese fold – through their acceptance of Buddhism and the Sinhala language, the pressures of state action

[7] Hardy, 1864, pp. 74–5.

[8] A. de Silva, 1847, pp. 276–7; Malalgoda, 1976, pp. 88–9, 101; and W. F. Gunawardena, 1975, pp. 50–2.

and economic forces, the influence of the hierarchical values and the manner in which the Goyigama functioned as a point of reference at the apex of the caste structure. On the other hand, in opposition to this centripetal, integrative pull, one can discern efforts on the part of each of the KSD castes to remain distinct, autonomous and in no way dependent upon the caste group which stood at the hub of the polity, namely the Goyigama caste. The manner in which the Karāva and Salāgama brought several other non-Goyigama castes into satellite status as service castes is one example of this tendency. The readiness of the Karāva to embrace the Catholic religion in Portuguese times might be interpreted in the same light. The logical end of this tendency was fission – the creation of new ethnic or religious social categories.[9] By the late eighteenth century, however, this centrifugal tendency had been subordinated to the centripetal insofar as the majority of members in each of the KSD castes was committed to a Sinhala Buddhist identity. In other words, the centripetal forces became the encompassing tendency and the centrifugal tendency was encapsulated and encompassed within it rather than being dissipated. In this situation centrifugality expressed itself in their attempts to have their own *bhikkhus*. Yet, in the course of these efforts the KSD Buddhist activists were pitchforked into reformative religious action which eventually placed them among the spearheads of the Buddhist revitalisation movement. They were also induced to emphasise various forms of religious and secular legitimation[10] – both processes that contributed

[9] Cf. the extent to which successful peasant entrepreneurs among the palm-wine-drinking and beef-eating Giriama in Kenya became 'Muslims' and thus separated themselves from some of the social obligations that were mediated by wine and meat ceremonies (Parkin, 1972, pp. 3, 40–7); and the fact that enterprising Lala farmers tended to become Jehovah's Witnesses and to appeal selectively to that religion as a justification for their departures from economically unprofitable relationships (Long, 1968, chap. 8). Both these entrepreneurial 'groups' were resident within their own tribe, i.e. within a culturally homogeneous setting. This was much less true for the maritime districts of Sri Lanka before the nineteenth century and was even less so in the British period.

[10] E.g. Buddhist fundamentalism and puritanism (below, pp. 212, 214–15, 243). Particularly in the last two centuries, the forms of ritual distinctiveness (Buddhist revitalisation) favoured by the Karāva elite bear similarity with the directions taken by the small group of Hausa traders in the Yoruba town of Ibadan, and by the Islamic small businessmen in Modjokuto, Java (where they faced Chinese business competition):

substantially towards their further integration into the Sinhalese polity.

This occurred in British times in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: precisely the period when the extension of new forms of communication, the strengthening of administrative machinery and the penetration of capitalism served to integrate Sinhalese society still further.[11] In this situation the persistence of caste solidarity and of the old drive towards caste independence found their expression in ambitious endeavours to secure positions of dominance within the integrated structure. The KSD castes did not, now, seek caste autonomy; or attempt to demolish the Sinhalese caste system and its supporting principles. They claimed caste primacy over the Goyigama and reached out for strategic or prestigious positions. Their efforts to break out of a position of status inconsistency, therefore, also involved actions which promoted their incorporation into the Sinhalese cultural order and which tended to dissolve their structural marginality.[12]

The British administration: egalitarianism and caste disabilities

The systematic improvements undertaken by the British in the machinery of state and the expansion in the communication network enabled the new rulers to extend their control over the island and involved a greater measure of centralisation than before. These changes in the institutional framework also involved an increase in the number of administrative posts manned by indigenous residents, while they created a number of opportunities in the private sector as well (e.g. lawyers, surveyors, brokers). Several of these posts carried prestige and authority, besides providing the potentiality for their incumbents to further their own economic interests. As only too evident in some of my previous examples, the indigenous

namely a fundamentalist yet modernising direction which affirms the virtues of the traditional religion (see Abner Cohen, *Custom and Politics in Urban Africa*, University of California Press, 1969; and Geertz, 1963).

[11] Furthermore, greater interaction with the Ceylon Tamils and competition for the loaves and fishes of office served to emphasise their Sinhalese identity.

[12] Regarding their marginality, see above, pp. 15–16, and below, pp. 233–41, 285.

people continued to see the state as a source of legitimation for social distance and social status, and they attempted to manipulate the British in support of their particular interests. The British officials in their turn responded to these pressures in their own manipulative way, but were also influenced by ideological premises which they imported from Britain and Europe.

Among the significant ideological imports were the notions of individual liberty and the equality of all men. Nineteenth-century Britain was by no means an egalitarian society, but egalitarian values had taken root and there were strong challenges to aristocratic privileges that were based purely on the ascriptive principle of birth. As exports, these values took on a more powerful colouring while, paradoxically, they permitted new lines of inequality and an ideology of white racial superiority. In their confident belief in the superiority of Western civilisation, the British looked on 'the natives' as pagans, primitives and backward peoples. The perplexing system of caste, in this view, was equated with such backwardness and was regarded with abhorrence. Indeed, in Sri Lanka as in India, the Evangelicals and missionaries regarded 'caste' as a positive obstacle to their endeavours.[13] The fervent opposition to caste disabilities among British idealists is illustrated graphically in Koorundu's rhetorical onslaught in 1819 against the oppressions to which the Salāgama labourers were subject, and his objection to the 'monopoly of personal liberty' enjoyed by the Goyigama.[14]

As such, the ethos of British colonial society in Sri Lanka tended to undermine caste restrictions. Important *loci* for the routine diffusion of this ethos were the school, the church, the British mercantile firm and, perhaps in lesser measure, the government office. Though caste-based conceptions of social distance may have been followed initially in the seating arrangements at these centres of interaction, the tendency was to do away with or modify them.[15] Yet these centres were too

[13] K. M. de Silva, 1965, pp. 186, 193–5; and Eric Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India*, Oxford: 1959, pp. 34ff.

[14] Koorundu, 1833, pp. 280–1. Also see Davy, 1821, p. 133; G. C. Mendis (ed.), 1956, vol. I, p. 59; Tennent, 1859, vol. II, p. 158; and John Ferguson, 1887, pp. 375, 377.

[15] E.g. Kannangara, 1966, pp. 209–10.

useful for the Goyigama persistently to boycott them in protest. From the outset, moreover, the British administration does not appear to have supported the maintenance of disabilities pertaining to dress, style of house and other such caste symbolism. Accordingly a number of 'low caste people' began to whitewash their houses, adorn themselves with jewellery and use palanquins at their marriage ceremonies. A few adopted Western dress. These symbolic acts of social revolution were greatly resented by the Goyigama caste in particular. But since the Oli, Rajaka, Wahumpura, Hunu and other castes were among those who had taken up these opportunities, they elicited protests from the Karāva as well.[16]

However, the British administration's policies on this issue were ambivalent, hesitant and inconsistent. This was particularly true during the first three or four decades of British rule. When the jury system was introduced in 1811, class and caste were officially recognised in the recruitment of juries, so that one found 'first class' and 'second class' juries, and the Goyigama men from the privileged families were not expected to sit together with men of 'lower caste', that is, with other castes. Preference was given to the Goyigama in selecting headmen, and a single group of related families consolidated their position at the apex of the headman system during the first four decades of British rule.[17] One of the British governors, Sir Wilmot Horton, reluctantly allowed that the administration could not follow the resolute actions of some missionaries who discountenanced or opposed the principle of caste discrimination: 'if the Governor were to disgust the natives of the higher caste by forcing a man of inferior caste among them, and compelling them to give up their employment unless they would associate with him, it is not too much to say that the Colony would be thrown into a state of all but rebellion'.[18] The government also benefited from caste customs insofar as they were institutionalised in the system of corvée labour (*rājakāriya*) and did not hesitate to exploit this advantage.

But the Colebrooke–Cameron Commission was not ready to

[16] *Ibid.*, pp. 209–10, 243–4; Mendis (ed.), 1956, vol. 1, pp. 48–9.
[17] Kannangara, 1966, pp. 245–57; Peebles, 1973, pp. 100–17.
[18] Kannangara, 1966, pp. 209–10.

acquiesce in this system of compulsory services.[19] Their unequivocal stand resulted in the abolition of *rājakāriya* on 12 April 1832. Perhaps encouraged by such developments and by the opinions of liberal-minded British officials and residents, a number of Karāva gentlemen, a group of Moors and a number of Goyigama *mudaliyars* of the 'second class' *separately* petitioned the Legislative Council with a request for the abolition of the existing distinctions in the composition of juries. Such criticisms had always met the opposition of the leading British judges, who favoured the *status quo* and argued that the government should not unnecessarily violate the habits and feelings of the people. The issue became something of a *cause célèbre* by the time that it was debated in the Legislative Council in 1843. In a rare practice, counsel were permitted to argue the case for the opposing sides, with the case for reform being presented in the idiom of the Enlightenment by a young Burgher lawyer named Richard Morgan. The reformers won. The recognition of class and caste distinctions in the selection of juries was abolished in 1844.[20]

While such reforms were of considerable significance, the degree to which the capitalist framework and British ways involved a confrontation with caste norms must not be overestimated. The tendency towards overestimation is typified in the opinion of a latter-day Civil Servant who believed that the refusal to recognise caste distinctions was one of the merits of British administration in Sri Lanka.[21] This view fails to notice that the opposition to caste distinctions that was officially favoured from about the 1830s and 1840s was always a qualified and partial one. Beyond the measures noted above, the British administration did not commit itself to a positive programme of action against caste.[22] Kandyan law received official recognition and must have supported the persistence of caste principles in such spheres as inheritance, adoption and marriage. The tenurial system associated with monastic and aristocratic landholdings (*vihāragam, dēvālagam* and *nindagam*) does not seem to have been seriously modified in practice by

[19] G. C. Mendis (ed.), 1956, vol. 1, pp. 42–5, 189–211.

[20] K. M. de Silva, 1965, pp. 200–3; and Digby, 1879, vol. 1, 120–7.

[21] 'Memoirs of a Ceylon Civil Servant, 1902–1935' by T. W. Roberts (Peradeniya Campus Library).

[22] K. M. de Silva, 1965, pp. 186–7.

British reform legislation and must have perpetuated caste discrimination in the Kandyan territories.[23] In some spheres the government even adhered to caste norms in its administrative practice, though this was rarely publicised. Political expediency and administrative advantage decreed that it was convenient to select certain local-level officials from particular castes in accordance with the caste composition of the localities and villages. Since the Goyigama were a preponderant element in the population, and of high traditional status, this meant that a number of posts were the preserves of the Goyigama. In 1880 a governor summed up the prevailing practice in noting that headmen had to be of 'good birth and independent means' and that it was 'absolutely essential in a Kandyan province that the Headman of a district should be a pure Sinhalese of a good family'. As Andradi observes, 'independent means' generally implied the control of landed property and 'good birth' meant good caste.[24] This meant that the territorial headmen at the higher and middle levels were selected from 'first class Goyigama' in the maritime districts and *radala* Goyigama in the Kandyan districts, though one found a few exceptions to this policy in British times. When a system of village tribunals and village communities was initiated in 1871, 'it was foreseen that the presidents and councillors would, as a rule, be drawn from the higher castes'.[25] Nor could it have been an accident that the handful of Sinhalese who received coveted Civil Service positions during the nineteenth century were virtually all from the ranks of the Goyigama. Even in the twentieth century it was by no means easy for non-Goyigama, and for Goyigama outside elite circles, to secure permission to sit for the Civil Service examinations.[26] It would seem that the Burghers and the Goyigama were favoured in the recruitment of personnel as

[23] The Service Tenures Ordinance of 1870 merely provided for the *voluntary* commutation of services and seems to have had limited effect. The growth of economic opportunities and the greater scope for spatial mobility may have contributed more towards the partial dissolution of traditional services.

[24] Longden to Kimberley, no. 152, 20 Sept. 1880 in CO 54/528; and Andradi, 1967, chap. on headmen system.

[25] 'Minute as to Village Tribunals' by John Douglas, 28 June 1880, in *Sessional Paper XX of 1880*, CO 54/528, fol. 179.

[26] ROHP, author's interviews with Sir Senarat Gunewardene, P. de S. Kularatne and G. P. Malalasekera.

teachers or inspectors of schools, or for 'high offices of trust' in the revenue and civil departments of government (as distinct from the specialised branches such as the postal and railway services).[27] In other spheres, the KSD were among the privileged castes. Till well into the twentieth century it appears that individuals outside the leading castes were excluded from consideration for officers' posts in the Police Department,[28] and it is probable that this practice was also extended in some measure to all the police ranks.

A key area in which government policy could differentially influence the distribution of advantages was the headman system. This system did not remain unchanged from the inheritance which the British received. The growth of specialised branches of the government necessarily curtailed the influence and functions of the headman. In other respects, however, his powers increased and his duties grew in volume.

To become a territorial headman as a *mudaliyar* or a *raṭēmahatmaya*, to be appointed to key posts as interpreters or *kachcheri mudaliyars* at the district offices, were confirmations of status and additional increments of status from that age-old fountainhead of legitimacy: the state. 'It was the rank, the position in the district and the various perquisites which made the office desirable to him [the headman]' said a high official in 1854, in emphasising that the salary attached to the post of a headman was hardly attractive.[29] There were rewards other than status however. Many headmen's posts carried with them patronage in the appointment of subordinates. In their official duties relating to the sale of lands and the settlement of land questions, they wielded power and influence in a sphere to which great importance was attached. With access to British officials and access to information that was not readily available to others, the leading headmen occupied nodal administrative roles which worked to their familial advantage.

The British also instituted important modifications in the

[27] W. W. [W. Mendis Wickramasinghe], 1885, p. 36; Dharmaratna, 1890, pp. 65–6.

[28] Jayasekera, 1970, p. 43; Labrooy, 1973, pp. 202–3, 283–4, 418; and my interview with the late J. H. Austin Fernando, 4 Apr. 1975. Austin Fernando (b. 1899) was among the first to breach these walls in the 1920s.

[29] The Queen's Advocate, as quoted in Peebles, 1973, pp. 147–8.

forms and positions of the headmen.[30] There was some retrenchment. The Dutch practice of having four *mahamudaliyars* in the Maritime Provinces (Sinhalese segment) was eventually altered so that, by the late 1830s, only one *mahamudaliyar* remained, and functioned as the fountainhead of the headman system in the Low-Country Sinhalese areas. Following the abolition of *rājakāriya*, the practice of appointing caste headmen was discontinued, though the existing generation of caste headmen was allowed to serve out their terms as sinecures. In the early nineteenth century, it was the practice to permit the younger brothers and the sons of *kōralēmudaliyars* and *mahamudaliyars* to use an honorary title. At some stage in the second quarter of the nineteenth century this practice was discontinued. In its place the nomenclature and forms of the headman system were employed to award personal honours. In the course of time a whole series of titular ranks was created. The most coveted of these was that labelled '*Mudaliyar* of the Governor's Gate'. The routinisation of procedures in this regard was supported by the practice initiated in the mid-nineteenth century of making these awards part of the Queen's list of birthday honours (as promulgated in Sri Lanka).

We see, then, the continuation of a familiar pattern in which the state served as a source of status legitimation. What was new and significant was the enlargement in the arena of awards to include new social categories. The honorary awards were opened to government servants who performed meritorious service as well as to civilians who rendered outstanding public service. From 1860 *ex officio* ranks were accorded to interpreters, fiscals, secretaries and government shroffs (cashiers). Not long after the British made these changes, clerks, translators and interpreters in government service began to petition for government awards. Merchant princes and capitalists also developed an eye for these awards in the choices they made for their philanthropic activity. In the course of the nineteenth century, therefore, manoeuvring for social advantage in this fashion increased.

In effect, there were two interrelated areas of competition: for honorary awards on the one hand and, on the other, for posts as

[30] This paragraph and that which follows are largely based on Peebles, 1973, pp. 147–9; and Andradi, 1967.

headmen and (after 1871) presidents of village tribunals. The intensity of competition is only too evident in the petitions and charges presented when positions fell vacant and particular decisions were taken.[31] The value attached to these titles and positions is also indicated in other ways: the degree to which such issues, or the achievements of particular caste headmen in the past, figured in the pamphlets produced by the KSD spokesmen; and the pride with which individuals, whether traditional aristocrats or *arrivistes*, displayed photographs in which they were outfitted in the regalia attached to a particular award or headman's position.[32] Among the Sinhalese and the Ceylon Tamils, even the Western-educated were prey to the notion that social distance should be measured in relation to the state or recognition by the state. A striking illustration of this tendency can be found in one passage in the *Kara-Goi Contest:* where the Karāva authors gleefully recall how, at the state banquet accorded to the visiting Duke of Edinburgh by the de Soysas in 1870, the governor's advisors inadvertently failed to inform the hosts about the principles of protocol, so that 'the Interpreter to the Governor found himself further away from His Excellency than the Interpreter to the Chief Justice'.[33] Indeed, the underlying concept that supported this polemical booklet was the belief that the state was the final arbiter of caste status – for it desired the British government to intervene and settle the contemporary conflict as to which caste was entitled to primacy. And in the authors' view there could be only one answer, of course: the Karāva.[34]

Despite these emphases, over the long run the headmen's posts were a declining asset. As a competence in English, a Westernised life-style and sheer wealth came to command social value, those headmen who lacked these assets in adequate measure found themselves trailing behind the headmen who did, and behind the doctors, lawyers and others in similar prestigious occupations. By the 1890s, say, a son of a *mudaliyar*

[31] Peebles, 1973, pp. 158–9.

[32] *Ibid.*, pp. 95, 152–9; *T. Cent. Imp.*, 1907, *passim*; and W. W. [W. Mendis Wickramasinghe], 1885, *passim* esp. pp. xiv, 9.

[33] Dharmaratna, 1890, pp. 61–2. Professor Bruce Kapferer has heard a similar story retailed by Karāva elite families today (personal communication).

[34] Dharmaratna, preface and pp. viii, 34, 61–2.

or a *raṭēmahatmaya* who picked up some English and entered a *kachcheri* (district headquarters) at an early age to take up an apprenticeship which led him, subject to evidence of some competence, to a post equivalent to his father's, was likely to find that he was a social inferior to a Goyigama or Karāva or other lawyer or doctor with a growing practice. Even the Burgher, Sinhalese and Tamil clerks in urban centres might consider themselves equal to such headmen in certain contexts and would not accord the latter the same deference they would accord the men in the genteel professions.[35] It is significant that even within the favoured circle of Low-Country Goyigama families who dominated the *mudaliyar*ships in the nineteenth century, the more talented sons tended to become lawyers or Civil Servants. And in the 1880s, the leading notable in the Goyigama Establishment was not the *Maha Mudaliyar* but Sir Harry Dias, a Supreme Court Justice.[36] However much they valued the titular ranks they had received and the regalia they could sport as a result, such *arrivistes* as Don Spater Senanayake and Don Philip Tudugalagē Wijewardene saw to it that their talented sons should receive a liberal education, and even sent one or two of them abroad to complete their tertiary training (e.g. F. R. Senanayake and D. R. Wijewardene). At some stage in the early twentieth century, many Western-educated Sinhalese, following the attitudes which the Burghers had long revealed, even began to spurn such titular ranks as *mudaliyar*ships and *muhandiram*ships. What they desired now were C.M.G.s and knighthoods.

Accompanying the competition for headmen's posts and prestigious titles, then, was a struggle to acquire a good education and an esteemed Western-style occupation. In the first instance, such competition was generally individual and familial. The primary goal, after all, was to improve one's familial lot. So that rivalry between families from the same caste was not uncommon. But wider group interests entered the picture. As with the competition for headmen's posts and honorary awards, pre-existing group feelings and casteism guaranteed that caste rivalries would be among the group interests at stake.

[35] The terms 'genteel professions' and 'liberal professions' will be used synonymously to refer to prestigious white-collar occupations such as those of doctor, lawyer, Christian minister, teacher, accountant, etc.

[36] Peebles, 1973, p. 277.

Pride, prejudice and power: social and caste conflict

The inroads of egalitarian values and the reformative measures of the British, however partial, loosened the norms of caste interaction, and altered the relationships between the Sinhalese castes. The pressures and opportunities associated with the growth of a capitalist export economy compounded this process. Latent tensions were released as several non-Goyigama castes perceived new opportunities to challenge some of the symbols of their subordination and to break free of the disabilities to which they were subject. The early decades of British rule, therefore, were replete with the dialectics of caste conflict, a conflict in which the emergence of new Buddhist fraternities was just one manifestation. Other manifestations took the form of localised altercations, judicial disputes or petitions to government.[37]

Caste tensions were sufficiently marked to attract the notice of several British observers. Among these, as we have seen, were Colebrooke and Horton. Writing in 1833, Horton contrasted the competition that prevailed in the maritime districts with the quiescence and the domination of the higher castes (to interpolate, the Goyigama *radala*) in the Kandyan districts; and was obviously attentive to the problems which the Low-Country Goyigama aristocracy faced as a result. His analysis ran thus:

> The difficulties are . . . much greater in Ceylon than [in] India . . . and this is to be attributed to the progressive relaxation in a great measure of the system of caste which is taking place at this moment in the Maritime Provinces of Ceylon . . . [where] many persons of the lower Castes are possessed of wealth and intelligence in an equal degree with those of the higher, and such castes, particularly the Challias, view the claims of the Vellale [Goyigama] to superiority with much jealousy . . . they are impressed with the conviction that they have an equal right with the Vellale to public employment, and this impression is gaining ground from day to day.[38]

He anticipated a continuation of these rivalries in the maritime districts.

[37] See above, pp. 90–2, 95, 113, 136; and below, pp. 152 ff.

[38] Horton to Stanley, 23 Nov. 1833 in CO 54/131. *Re* his concern for the interests of the 'first class Goyigama', also see his despatch no. 42, 8 Mar. 1834 in CO 54/134.

This prediction was amply justified. However, the competition did not limit itself to these regions. As the Kandyan districts were opened up by coffee cultivation and roads, and as numbers of Low-Country Sinhalese penetrated these areas, the rivalries were extended into these localities. Colombo and the Low-Country, nevertheless, remained the *locus* of the sharpest rivalry. Until more detailed research is undertaken, the range and variety of competition and conflict during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries cannot be fully brought out. But in the pages that follow an attempt will be made to assemble information which illustrates the social competition that occurred, with particular attention to the decades dating from the 1850s.

Horton was not conjuring up ghosts. He was presenting fears – Goyigama fears. The Goyigama aristocracy[39] was only too conscious of the developing challenges and the implications of the economic and institutional transformation that was under way. In appealing for a higher salary in 1840, Ernest de Saram, then the *Maha Mudaliyar*, decried – in exaggerated fashion – the inability of the 'first class Goyigama' to provide a 'suitable education' for their children[40] and the frightening consequences of this situation:

> they will be always thrown into the background and be virtually shut out from all respectable public offices. On the other hand, persons of other classes whose present accidental admission into many lucrative and high situations has placed within their reach the means of giving the most liberal education to their children, even in England – will

[39] The term 'Goyigama aristocracy' is used to refer to those Goyigama individuals, families and close relatives in both the Low-Country and Kandyan districts who were descended from the Goyigama aristocracy of the late eighteenth century and who were widely regarded as being of aristocratic extraction. It therefore encompasses the Kandyan *radala* families and the 'first class Goyigama' in the Low-Country. Within this social formation one can identify a core element made up of a few favoured *radala* families and a number of related Goyigama of the 'first class' who gained the trust of the British administration and secured key advisory posts in the headman system or prestigious appointments in the Ceylon Civil Service and the Legislative Council. This core element will be described as the Goyigama Establishment elite.

[40] In point of fact, most of the Sinhalese who received an English education in the early nineteenth century were sons of Goyigama headmen and their relatives, while the majority of Sinhalese attending the Colombo Academy in its early years were of Goyigama stock (L. H. Gratiaen, *Government Schools in Ceylon, 1789–1832*, Dehiwala: 1929, pp. 55–6; Jayasekera, 1970, p. 33; Andradi, 1967, p. 11; and Peebles, 1973, pp. 96, 273–9, 336).

ultimately have it in their power to raise their offspring even yet higher than themselves. And thus, on account of their comparative poverty, the respectable portion of the aboriginal natives cannot but, by degrees, most inevitably sink into obscurity, unless they shall be so far fortunate to meet with that liberality at the hands of Government, which will enable them to extend to their offspring, the means of upholding the relative position which their ancient families have ever occupied among the Natives of this Island.[41]

Again, some members of the Panabokke family in Kandy District were among the few Kandyan *radala* who realised at an early date the need to acquire an English education in order to sustain their position. As related subsequently (1902) by T. B. Panabokke (1846–1902) in his autobiography:

The Kandyans were beginning to realise that their hold of the country and people was gradually slipping out. Others alien by race and culture were being favoured and preferred in the Government appointments. My uncle had the sense to see that it would help me in life and was only too pleased to send me to [the school maintained by the Church Missionary Society at Kotte].[42]

While allowing for the influence of later events in his narration, it is evident that ethnic and caste loyalties threaded social interaction among the schoolboys at this institution in the 1840s:

Though the Singhalese predominated there were Burghers and Tamils and boys of other races. The Singhalese boys were divided into caste groups and the Karawe community seemed to be more caste ridden and caste conscious than the others. There were a few Kandyans who instinctively came together not in antagonism to others, but from a sheer fellow feeling common to those who leave home behind.[43]

The defensive reactions of the Goyigama aristocracy can be seen in a number of events. In 1833, when the British decided to do away with the positions of caste headmen, they sought to transfer the existing incumbents to the district administration and to place them alongside the Goyigama headmen as *kōralē-mudaliyars* and *muhandirams*. Immediately, the subordinate

[41] Quoted in P. E. Pieris, *Notes on Some Sinhalese Families, Part VI*, n.d., p. 45.

[42] Panabokke and Halangode (eds.), 1938 (?) p. 11. This book is part autobiography and part biography. The quotation is from the autobiographical section which was written about 1902.

[43] *Ibid.*, p. 13.

Goyigama headmen refused to serve under the non-Goyigama and at least one popular demonstration is said to have occurred.[44] Again, the award of high titular ranks to individuals from outside the 'top drawer' caused consternation and resistance. A particularly significant occasion arose around 1853 with the British government's decision to honour Jeronis de Soysa. A tug-of-war took place. Following Ernest de Saram's influential intervention, the initial decision to make him a *Mudaliyar* of the Governor's Gate was altered to the lower rank of '*Mudaliyar* of Moratuwa', but was then adhered to as some British officials put their weight behind the original proposal.[45] As indicated by the *Colombo Observer*, this was an important victory for the emerging Karāva elite:

> The dignity conferred on Mr De Soysa is one that has hitherto been jealously confined to the small knot of obstructives amongst the Singhalese who call themselves first class Velales [Goyigama]; and on this occasion the Maha Modliar, we believe, did his little best to prevent the Government from shocking the prejudices of the people – meaning by that phrase a little knot of Modliars – by conferring the highest Native rank in its gift on a man of the fisher caste.[46]

Naturally, the Karāva celebrated this triumph. And they did so with explosive extravagance. On 9 June 1853 a triumphant procession was organised from Grandpass in the north of Colombo to Moratuwa, twelve miles to the south. On this occasion, 'Joronis De Soysa Dharma Goonewardene Wepolle Jayasooria Dessanayake Karoonaratne' was suitably attired in 'a coat of dark broad-cloth, over which was thrown his chain of honor, formed of about 150 sovereigns linked together in couples, and terminating in an ornament formed of a cluster of forty-five of the same coins'. The symbols of majesty involved a curious assortment of Western and indigenous styles: the firing of guns, the screeching of fifes and the beating of tom-toms; talipot bearers on the one hand and *lascarins* of the guard in 'scarlet habiliments' on the other. The route was strategi-

[44] Peebles, 1973, p. 128; Andradi, 1967, chap. on headmen system; and W. W. [W. Mendis Wickramasinghe], 1885, p. 9.

[45] Peebles, 1973, pp. 153–4; and K. M. de Silva, 1965, p. 204. For a mid-eighteenth century contretemps of a similar type, relating to a Durāva headman, see Kotelawele, 1978, p. 209.

[46] *Colombo Observer*, 13 June 1853, in William Skeen, 1870, p. 369.

cally planned and the procession paused at the houses of the Government Agent, the Queen's Advocate and other British notables, so that Jeronis de Soysa could be publicly congratulated. He was also congratulated by the *Muhandiram* of Salpiti Korale and at Ratmalana 'the Washermen of the District waited on the Modliar, requesting that he would allow them to do him the honor of spreading white cloths on the ground for him to walk on until he reached his house', so that the final leg of the *perahära* was on foot. And a crowd of about 5,000 awaited him at his house in Moratuwa, where the celebrations went on late into the night amidst the crackle of fireworks.[47]

Symbols of status have been much prized in Sinhalese society from time immemorial. Inevitably, such symbols were widely employed in factional conflict of all types. Life-style and conspicuous consumption were among the important symbols. Patrimonial largesse, outstanding family ceremonies and the ability to field a large *nä pirisa* (host of relatives) and *pirivara* (retinue) at such ceremonies were among the measures of social prestige, and the instruments thereof.[48] The family festival and the extent of one's retinue were as functional as the peacock's plumage. They were particularly valued by an emerging elite family. The celebration arranged by the de Soysas was a classic example of a general principle. Thus, when Matthew Gomes, a Rajaka caste headman, was in the social ascent in the 1830s and 1840s and when he held the post of *Mudaliyar* of the Treasury (1847), he made it a point to maintain ' a splendid walauwa' around which British and Burgher families gathered in response to his hospitality.[49] Alas, he overreached himself and got caught out in some administrative duplicity and financial misdemeanour. Not so the de Soysas. They rolled progressively forward. In their close friendship with the rising Burgher

[47] *Ibid.*, see appendix 2.

[48] Obeyesekere, 1967, pp. 215–35, 242–7. Also Tambiah, 1963, pp. 97–100; and Leach, 1961a, pp. 89–93, 175–6.

[49] Dharmaratna, 1890, pp. 50–1. Gomes was appointed '*Mudaliyar* of the Washers' in 1814 and became a Cashier of the General Treasury in 1824, despite objections from several quarters (Peebles, 1973, pp. 109, 153). Cf. the villager in Pul Eliya whose son married a daughter of a relatively wealthy landowner in the village in the early 1930s: he threw a wedding which remained an undying memory in the popular recollections of the villagers ever since, but the proud father had been hopelessly in debt thereafter (Leach, 1961a, pp. 92–3).

lawyer Richard Morgan (later knighted) moreover, they had an asset of great value, especially when Morgan was appointed Queen's Advocate in the 1860s and became a confidant of, first, Governor Hercules Robinson (1865–71) and then, Sir William Gregory (1871–7).[50] When the Duke of Edinburgh paid an official visit to Sri Lanka in 1870, the de Soysas were accorded the privilege of giving him the only 'native' reception in Colombo during his crowded tour. Their very choice was a symbolic triumph for the Karāva elite. If we are to rely on Karāva folklore, and it must be taken with caution, the Goyigama Establishment elite got together and conspired to prevent this entertainment; and unsuccessfully sought permission to provide a reception of their own; while it has also been said that the *Maha Mudaliyar*'s inclination to boycott the de Soysa reception could not withstand the force of the governor's opposition.[51] Susew and C. H. de Soysa responded to this victory with a banquet on a monumental scale, a banquet which captured the social limelight then and has cut its epigraph in historical memory since. A £10,000 banquet could not but do so.[52]

If the norms which powered these extravagances were essentially traditional, many of their forms and embellishments, the tinsel, sparkle and glitter, had Western ingredients. Imported goods and Western dress were components in the life-style that came, increasingly, to dominate the social behaviour of the Ceylonese elites. It was in this mixed vein and with social implications of importance that Danister Perera Abeyewardena (Karāva) took pride in his 'smart dog-cart and high stepper' and attached a winking light to the forehead of the horse; and that D. E. H. Pedris (Wahumpura) trotted about on a magnificent stallion.[53] Again, during Queen Victoria's

[50] Digby, 1879, vol. 1, p. 231 and *passim*. Morgan's photograph is among the select list of outsiders in the special family album of the Hännädigē Pierises (in the possession of Mr L. S. D. Pieris).

[51] Family folklore gathered by me during interviews; and Sir Wilfred de Soysa's reminiscences as communicated to Sunimal Fernando.

[52] See *Ceylon Observer*, 23 Apr. 1870; and Capper, 1871, pp. 94–6.

[53] Reminiscences of the Perera Abeyewardenas of Galle as related in the form of children's folk tales by Mrs F. B. de Mel (manuscript with author and Miss Rohini de Mel); and one of the pieces of information which I gathered during my ROHP project and the coverage of the 1915 riots (source misplaced but this is a point that has remained firmly embedded in my memory).

Golden Jubilee Year in 1887 some of the wealthy Sinhalese families vied with each other in sponsoring celebrations in which they were brought into public association with high government officials.[54]

To the Goyigama aristocracy the developing clouds in the mid-nineteenth century must have been ominous. Besides the social triumphs of the de Soysas and the economic successes of Karāva capitalists that were being manifested daily, they found that the British government was ready to appoint some Salāgama and Karāva personnel as *kōralēmudaliyars* in some coastal sub-districts: to cite a few examples, Joseph Mendis, Johannes Pieris, Abaysakara Gunewardene and Don Bastian Jayasooriya Goonewardene among the Karāva, and Louis de Zoysa and Dandris de Silva Gooneratne among the Salāgama. Through seniority and the abilities he had revealed as Chief Translator of the Colonial Secretary's office (in the 1860s), Louis de Zoysa eventually was awarded the title of *Maha Mudaliyar* in 1879, a position he shared with Conrad Peter Dias Bandaranaike. During the third quarter of the nineteenth century, moreover, the following non-Goyigama received the honorary title of a *Mudaliyar* of the Governor's Gate: Susew de Soysa (1870), Sampson Rajapakse (1874), Alvinu Lowe (1882) and Dandris de Silva Gooneratne (1882). It has also been computed that in the period from 1879–84 there were more Karāva and Salāgama *kōralēmudaliyars* than ever before.[55] Echoing the fears of Ernest de Saram, in 1880 the translators of the *Niti-Nighanduva* complained that the government had 'on several occasions conferred the ranks and situations held by the higher castes on men of low caste' and that 'people of other castes were gradually allowed . . . to enjoy privileges and rank which by birth and caste they were not entitled to'.[56]

Among the *kōralēmudaliyars*, nevertheless, the Goyigama always retained a majority of posts. The Village Communities Ordinance of 1871, moreover, boded well for their power in the villages and districts, for the government intended that the leading headmen should hold the presiding roles. It was the turn of the Karāva notables to mount a defensive operation.

[54] Peebles, 1973, p. 317.
[55] Peebles, 1973, pp. 107–10, 115, 117, 153–8; and Dharmaratna, 1890, pp. iv, 13.
[56] As quoted in Labrooy, 1973, p. 199.

After an organisers' meeting at C. H. de Soysa's house in Moratuwa on 18 November 1871, in which his father-in-law Jusē de Silva acted as chairman, a public meeting was convened on 29 November in the verandah and compound of de Soysa's house: 'by 2 o'clock, upwards of 250 [people] had assembled from Galkisse, Dehiwelle, Morottoo, Ratmalane, Pantura, Caltura, Bentotte, and 18 adjoining villages. The parties present were thoroughly representative: influential elders, householders, notaries, and men of wealth and position.'[57]

The pith of their opposition was directed against the powers granted by the contemplated Ordinance to the headmen. At this meeting and in letters to the press, the headmen were castigated on various grounds: corruption, chicanery and so forth. It was alleged that they were commonly referred to as 'land eaters'; while one anonymous writer noted: 'so long as the office of Modliar is confined to one class, the country cannot be well governed'.[58] There were as many as fourteen resolutions agreed upon at the protest meeting. The Ordinance as a whole received approval. But the key resolutions included one which demanded the election of presidents of village tribunals rather than their nomination by the state, and another which wanted headmen of all kinds and government contractors (including renters) to be debarred from recruitment to such posts. The latter resolution aroused 'a most animated expression of opinion'.[59]

This agitation had little success. In the decades immediately after 1871, the government appears to have adhered to its original intention of choosing headmen as presidents of the village tribunals. Ten years later the Auditor General, John Douglas, cautiously admitted that it was 'not impossible that these gansabhawas [might], to some extent, [have been] worked for the upholding of caste institutions and prejudices'.[60] His comments confirm the principal contentions that have been

[57] *Ceylon Observer*, 30 Nov. 1871.

[58] Letter to editor from 'Agonistes' in *Ceylon Observer*, 25 Nov. 1871.

[59] *Ceylon Observer*, 30 Nov. 1871; and also its issues of 23 Nov. and 11 Dec. 1871. Note that the same facets of the Ordinance were also opposed by Muttu Coomaraswamy and James Alwis in the Legislative Council. Since the latter was a member of the Goyigama aristocracy his stance was significant and appears to be a maverick action.

[60] 'Minute as to Village Tribunals', 28 June 1880, in *Sessional Paper XX of 1880*, in CO 54/528, fols. 179–80.

pressed in the preceding pages, while yet indicating that caste competition extended down to the village level. Specifically singling out 'the western and southern seaboards of the Island', he said:

Here is to be found a pushing and industrious population of carpenters, fishermen, coir-rope dealers, and the like, belonging exclusively to what are regarded as the inferior castes. These people are brought much into contact with Europeans, education is largely spread among them, and they have outstripped their high caste neighbours in the race for wealth and material prosperity. In these localities a constant struggle is going on between the higher and lower castes, which results in an infinity of police court cases, of petty assault, and the like, and it would be hardly natural that the inferior castes should favour the relegation of the decision on such disputes from a European tribunal to one drawn possibly, if not presumably, from the ranks of their adversaries.

It was into this situation and against these currents that Sir Arthur Gordon thrust himself in the period from 1883 to 1890. In keeping with his policies elsewhere, Gordon believed that a governor should respect and patronise the native aristocracy. In the Goyigama headmen families he perceived such an aristocracy. In the *Maha Mudaliyar,* C. P. Dias Bandaranaike, he found a trusted adviser. He considered the non-Goyigama unsuited to higher offices in the native department and reversed the fledgling tendency to promote qualified non-Goyigama to *mudaliyar*ships. In this fashion his policies 'disrupted trends of social change that had been underway for at least 50 years' and 'intensified discrepancies in an already unstable situation'. 'His appointments, honorary ranks, and public gestures of support gave greater credence to the aspirations of [the aristocratic Goyigama] elite.'[61]

It is not surprising that the KSD elites reacted sharply. This was reflected in the agitation mounted by the Ceylon Agricultural Association against the extension of the railway to Uva and against the grain taxes.[62] Typically, too, their hostility was expressed at the level of public symbolism. On the eve of a

[61] Peebles, 1973, chap. 8 esp. pp. 311–18, 323, 326, 338–9. Also John Ferguson, 1887, pp. 38–41, 377.

[62] For background information, see J. K. Chapman, *The Career of Arthur Hamilton Gordon, First Lord Stanmore, 1829–1912*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964, chap. 8; D. Wesumperuma, 'Land Sales under the Paddy Tax in British Ceylon',

governor's departure it was customary for him to receive public addresses of esteem from gatherings of British and Ceylonese residents; and popular governors even had statues erected in their honour. It would appear that the Goyigama elite were among those who canvassed for a public address and a collection of money to erect a statue in honour of Sir Arthur Gordon. These proposals met the implacable resistance of the Karāva elite, directed by its Moratuwa segment and 'fortified' by the support of 'the respectable section of the Burghers'.[63] J. R. Weinman depicts the struggle in his irrepressible style:

> [Gordon] fell foul of 'Moratuwa' and 'Moratuwa' hated him with deadly hatred. He violated the golden rule of not being careful in the selection of one's enemies. There was a public meeting to take steps to give him a fitting farewell. Moratuwa assembled in force, and broke up the meeting . . . [Gordon] carried the railway beyond Nanu Oya, in spite of powerful opposition. The Agricultural Association eventually developed into a political body whose platform was opposition to Sir Arthur Gordon, who revenged himself by calling it a 'grotesque clique'.[64]

It is not surprising that an agitation for the abolition of the headman system should spring up during this period and gather increasing strength in the course of the twentieth century. Not all of this opposition originated among disaffected non-Goyigama castes motivated by caste interests. Many Burghers and several Westernised Sinhalese from a variety of castes, including the Goyigama, joined in the agitation on the ground that the system was 'feudal' and ridden with corruption, or for similar ideological reasons. Nevertheless, caste interests continued to influence this demand. It is significant that a memorial collected by Karāva leaders in 1905 in support of the nomination of James Peiris as the Low-Country Sinhalese Member of the Legislative Council should touch on the widespread 'agitation . . . against the native headman system'; and that it did so after objecting to the renomination of S. C. Obeyesekere on the ground that the memorials in support

Vidyodaya Journal of Arts, Sciences and Letters, vol. II, Jan. 1969, pp. 19–33; Jayasekera, 1970, pp. 126–7; and Labrooy, 1973, pp. 200–4, 233–4, 230.

63 Dharmaratna, 1890, pp. 85–6.

64 J. R. Weinman, *Our Legislature*, Colombo: The Associated Newspapers of Ceylon Ltd, 1947, p. 51.

of the latter were marshalled by the headmen and that he was 'practically the representative of the native officials whose opinions and interests he shared'.[65] In brief, the twentieth-century demands for the reform or abolition of the headman system were partly motivated by anti-Goyigama sentiments and became one part of the anti-Goyigama movement among the KSD and other caste elites. Insofar as the Left Movement (post-1930s) incorporated anti-Goyigama sentiments, its virulent opposition to the headman system must be regarded as a combination of Marxist ideology and anti-Goyigama feelings rooted in material interests.

'We are the greatest': controversies over caste primacy

Gordon's powerful intervention in support of the Goyigama Establishment elite in the 1880s added fuel to another fire that had been flickering for some time: namely the controversy over primacy in the Sinhalese caste hierarchy. It is possible that this struggle had its roots in the early half of the nineteenth century. Spokesmen for the Goyigama and Karāva engaged in a lively battle on the relative status of their castes in 1868; while another debate occurred in 1870.[66] In 1876, a leading Karāva monk, Weligamē Sri Sumangala thero, published a book named *Itihāsa* in which he argued the Karāva case for caste superiority. This prompted a reply (1877) from a well-known Goyigama monk in the Low-Country, Hikkaduvē Sri Sumangala thero, and some Goyigama lawyers. Further research may bring to light other occasions of newspaper or pamphleteering controversy, but the present evidence points to the years 1885–6 as the date of the next significant outbreak. It was a sustained engagement and brought forth at least seventeen pamphlets from Salāgama, Goyigama, Karāva, Durāva and Beravā writers, mostly in Sinhalese.[67] The most immediate causes for this battle of words appear to have been Gordon's partialities and the revelation that the *Niti-Nighanduva* was

[65] 'The Humble Memorial of the Undersigned Low-Country Sinhalese Subjects of His Majesty in Ceylon', encl. 1 in Governor to Sec. of State, no. 138, 5 Apr. 1905, CO 54 series. [66] Jayasekera, 1970, p. 44; and Dharmaratna, 1890, p. 16.

[67] See list in appendix 3. Also see Jayasekera, 1970, pp. 44–5; and Ryan, 1953, pp. 332–5.

being treated as an authoritative account of the Sinhalese caste system. The *Niti-Nighanduva* had been edited by (Sir) T. B. Panabokke and a British Civil Servant, C. J. R. Le Mesurier, and had been published by the Government Press in 1880. *The Vocabulary of Kandyan Law as It Existed in the Last Days of the Kandyan Kingdom*, as this book was entitled, included a list of Sinhalese castes placed within a single hierarchical scheme. Apparently unnoticed at the outset, by 1885 its influential existence had come to the notice of KSD protagonists. They came to believe that Gordon treated it 'in the light of the Englishman's Bible, an authority beyond question, like God or Debrett'.[68] Their response was vituperative. It was answered in kind by the Goyigama. As the polemics provided a causal force of their own, the 'battle' escalated.

Some caste pamphlets appeared in the years 1890, 1904 and 1914, while the period 1909–11 was marked by another flurry of 'letters to the editor' and several pamphlets, among them Dr A. E. Roberts' publications in support of the Navandanna claims to caste primacy. This list is not comprehensive. A thorough survey among the newspapers and archival sources will probably reveal many more instances of caste claims. A more or less endemic line of controversy might even be traced. In any event one thing is clear: a significant series of caste controversies occurred in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (see appendix 3).

The existing body of publications produced in the course of this war of words still awaits intensive study.[69] For the interim, some preliminary remarks are essayed here, largely on the basis of the handful of pamphlets or manuscripts written in English.

The majority of writings were in Sinhalese and were the work of the vernacular-educated intelligentsia in the ranks of the national and local elites. A significant number of authors were Buddhist monks. There was at least one prominent Sinhala journalist: G. D. Pälis Appuhamy (*c.*1842–1910) from the

68 W. W. [W. Mendis Wickramasinghe], 1885, preface; and *Ceylon Observer*, 27 July 1885. Also see M. A. Pieris and S. P. Dias, 'A Discussion on the Low Castes and an Exposé of the Futility of the Statement in the Niti Nigandu', dated 1886 (*sic*) in the H. C. P. Bell Caste Papers: Karava (in Colombo Museum); and Dharmaratna, 1890, pp. 1 and 36–43.

69 A knowledge of classical Sinhalese and the ability to master poetical forms will be essential tools.

GanegodaAppuhāmilagē Seneviratne family which was closely associated with the Vidyodaya Pirivena.[70] Many wrote under pseudonyms. This was hardly surprising in view of the vituperative depths to which some of the pamphlets descended – leading H. C. P. Bell to describe some as 'filthy'. A. F. Kawrawasekhara and Battaramullē Sri Subhuti *Terunannsē*, a Goyigama monk who was a staunch Sinhala Buddhist nationalist as well, provided respective Karā – Govi examples of this style of writing. Epithets were freely used. Battaramullē was described as 'an urinating dog' and T. B. Panabokke as a 'stalwart dog'; while the *Niti-Nighanduva* was termed a 'perversion' and a 'lying book'.[71]

There is more than enough ground to conjecture that the pamphlets were financed by the merchant princes, plantation owners and men of affluence among the Sinhalese elites. The GanegodaAppuhāmilagē Seneviratnes, Arnold Dias and the de Soysas are examples of such financial sponsors. Western-educated caste notables were also party to this controversy. The *Kara-Goi Contest* was written jointly by a number of Karāva from the liberal professions; and such writers as W. D. S. Wickremasekera, Weligama Sri Sumangala thero and TambiAppu Gurunnānsē were well-versed in English. The debate was also sustained in letters to the editor in the English newspapers and even entered the august chambers of the Royal Asiatic Society, Ceylon Branch, tangentially at least, in a historical controversy in 1905.[72] Significantly, the *Sudra Nirnaya* (published in 1885) showed a great concern about administrative posts and seats in the Legislative Council. It also accused the *Niti Nighanduva* of wanting 'to monopolise, for the Govi-caste alone, the ranks and emoluments attached to public posts'.[73]

[70] For bio-data, see Roberts, 1970b, p. 15; Kalukognavē Pragnasekerabhidana (ed.), *Sinhala Puvat Pat Sangarā Itihasaya*, Colombo: M. D. Gunasena & Co., 1968, vol. 5, pp. 259–60; and Malalgoda, 1976, pp. 239–41.

[71] Ryan, 1953, pp. 332; and Pieris and Dias, 1886 (*sic*), in H. C. P. Bell Caste Papers (Colombo Museum).

[72] Jayasekera, 1970, p. 45; and *Ceylon Independent*, 10–11 Mar. 1905. Also see H. F. and F. A. Fernando, 1920; de Fonseka, 1921, pp. 1–21; and A. H. T. de S [Soysa], 1930. The arguments used at the R.A.S. meeting and in the references above appeared previously in the polemical caste publications (e.g. Dharmaratna, 1890, pp. 58–9).

[73] Pieris and Dias, 1886 (*sic*), in H. C. P. Bell Caste Papers (Colombo Museum).

In these caste polemics two features stand out: all spokesmen accepted the notion of a single unified caste hierarchy and most spokesmen did not challenge the persistence of a caste system. On the latter point, however, there was some uneasiness and discomfort among several of the English-media pamphleteers – discomfort that can be explained by the osmosis of Western egalitarian values, the influence of resident Britons and the Burghers and the occasional assault on casteism by a few Sinhalese idealists.[74] As a result, ambivalences permeated their writings. Some of their claims were even couched in the language of egalitarianism. W. Mendis Wikramasinghe proclaimed that his aim was to demolish the caste system, but proceeded to spell out his caste prejudices and argue that the Salāgama were of Brahmin stock and therefore *the* most superior caste in Sri Lanka. The authors of the *Kara-Goi Contest* said that, as enlightened men and Christians, they 'deprecate [d] all controversy about caste' and then argued strongly that the Karāva were 'the first caste in Ceylon', vilified the Goyigama and wanted the government to expel them from the principal posts. They contended that 'merit and talent alone ought to be rewarded irrespective of caste', that the government should ascertain with greater assiduity which was the highest caste (obviously the Karāva), and admit 'the people of such caste alone . . . to offices of honour and trust'.[75] Clearly, they were determined that the Karāva were entitled to the best of every argument available, even contradictory ones. At base, the propagandists involved in these controversies did not so much want the caste system overthrown as to have the principles of caste hierarchy modified in their favour.

The modifications sought, or the defences in favour of the prevailing system, were in terms of the *varṇa* model: Brahmin, Kshātriya, Vaisya and Sudra in order of hierarchy. As indicated earlier, this strategy was a commonplace in the attempts to secure caste mobility in India because the *varṇa* model provided 'a common social language' and it was advantageous for

[74] Citations in n. 14, above; Holly, 1889, pp. 297–9; and J. W. P. [Perera], 1887. For twentieth-century expressions, see 'The golden vow against caste' retailed in *The National Monthly*, 1913 *et seq.*; and Wijesinghe, 1927. The latter work was financed by D. W. Pedris (Wahumpura) and the author was a Salāgama (information from James T. Rutnam, the proofreader).

[75] Dharmaratna, 1890, pp. iv-v, 6, 34.

an aspiring caste to use these broad categories rather than the caste names peculiar to its area.[76] In Sri Lanka it was obviously to the advantage of the K S D elites to emphasise the *varṇa* model. The Goyigama were widely acknowledged to be of Sudra stock and were even referred to as Vellala, a term that was widely known to represent a Sudra caste. By reference to the *varṇa* scheme and by bringing forward arguments which linked their caste with one of the higher *varṇas*, the K S D and other claimant castes could up-stage the Goyigama – in argument. So that the Karāva generally claimed Kshātriya origin; the Salāgama claimed Brahmin status, as did one Beravā letter-writer in 1908; one Durāva pamphlet claimed Kshātriya status through descent from the Gonds of Bengal; and Dr A. E. Roberts, in line with the Smiths of south India, claimed that the Navandanna were descended from the Visvakarma Brahmins. Even the Goyigama defence, or some expressions thereof, did not break free of this *varṇa* model.[77]

The claims of the K S D spokesmen are notable for the manner in which the majority of them assiduously avoided a discussion of each other's views. The target, usually, was the Goyigama caste and its alleged superiority. It was generally a case of dyadic comparison, a pairing-off: 'we are the greatest, the Govi are lower than us'. The *Kara-Goi Contest* did show an overt brother-feeling towards the Salāgama and the Durāva on lines which suggested that they were all in the same boat. Yet these sentiments were suspiciously sugary and obvious: for instance, the reference to 'our firm friends and ancient allies, the witty Chalias and poetic Durawes';[78] and no attempt was made to present a revised caste hierarchy which delineated their ranks relative to each other. Indeed, few of the caste pamphlets appear to have done so. W. Mendis Wikramasinghe appears to have been unusual in including in his work a caste list drawn up by one Kebellana Aratchi, a Goyigama, while Bentota Sedaran Arachchi's Sinhala pamphlet is an exceptional instance which represents a Beravā attack on the Salāgama.

The caste warfare assisted the integrative trend towards a

[76] Srinivas, 1962, pp. 63–9. Also see Srinivas, 1967, pp. 1–45.

[77] Jayasekera, 1970, pp. 44–5; Ryan, 1953, pp. 332–4; and Peebles, 1973, pp. 310–11.

[78] Dharmaratna, 1890, p. 15. In the late 1880s the Karāva and Durāva leaders in Colombo seem to have been cooperating politically, and in 1911 the Pereira brothers

broad framework of Sinhalese castes which linked the Kandyan districts and the Low-Country in a single cognitive hierarchy, albeit one with obscurities. It could also be said to have confirmed the place of the K S D castes in the higher reaches of this system. Beyond these consequences and the escalation of group rivalries, it is doubtful if the ordering of castes in the popular view was much modified by this series of engagements, though the relative importance of the Navandanna may have deteriorated. There was no arbiter available. The British administration, by and large, declined this role; even, perhaps, disdained such a function. This favoured the *status quo*, for the Goyigama were in a numerical majority and were themselves not without wealth, status and power.

In this sense, in relation to the hierarchical status of the Goyigama, no caste mobility was achieved by the KSD castes as a consequence of their claims. The Goyigama were shaken but not toppled from their position at the top of the caste heap, at least in their self-evaluation and that of many non-combatants.[79] In another sense, the ability of so many non-Goyigama castes, even the occasional Beravā or Wahumpura spokesmen, to mount such sustained attacks and to question the superiority of the Goyigama reflects a sea-change in caste competition. Indeed, the KSD castes went even further and claimed a clear superiority over the Goyigama, while seeking to degrade them through verbal vilification and symbolic public triumphs. Such challenges would not have been feasible in pre-British times in either the Kandyan Kingdom or the Maritime Provinces. Indeed, they were probably not feasible in the early decades of the nineteenth century. As such, they mark the economic and social advances of the KSD caste elites in the nineteenth century, their growing self-confidence and group consciousness and their determination to serve as the pathfinders and representatives of their particular caste. The Karāva elite were aware of the benefits of wealth, education and

supported Dr Marcus Fernando's candidature (Jayasekera, 1970; and Labrooy, 1973, p. 447).

79 See the evaluations in relatively recent times in Ryan, 1953, pp. 93ff. Even today some Karāva admit the higher caste status of the Goyigama (personal communications from Messrs M. W. Amarasiri de Silva, Sunimal Fernando and Prof. Bruce Kapferer from their experiences in the Southern Province).

the new criteria of prestige in this struggle. In the 1880s they looked to their bright young men in the prestigious institutions of learning in Britain as their spearheads of the near future: 'Mr. Barrister Peiris [James Peiris, recently returned after a notable career at Cambridge] can afford to wait a little longer. In a few years more, *the great cause* will be strengthened by the arrival of the Fernandos and other youths trained in England. *The favoured class must be smashed up*.'[80]

If the Goyigama elite believed in their caste superiority, it was of social significance that the KSD caste elites did not accept this position and openly proclaimed their belief to the contrary. Insofar as these developments led to the dissolution of those expressions of social subordination which had been traditionally accepted by members of these castes when in interaction with the Goyigama in the Sinhalese hinterland, one is entitled to speak of an important modification in the expressions of structural distance in the Sinhalese caste system.

1880s–1920s: manifestations of Karāva power and more caste rivalry

There were several other aspects of the *status quo* which were not to the liking of the KSD caste elites, particularly the Karāva elite. The Karāva elite pushed forward aggressively on several fronts and were powerful elements in the Buddhist revivalist and the constitutional reform movements. The influential roles of Karāva in these movements were symptoms of their enhanced economic power and social status. These thrusts also replicated the classic phenomenon: a situation of discrepancy between economic power and political weight which generates an effort to bring the latter into line with the distribution of economic resources.

Accordingly, they set their sights upon the nominated seat in the Legislative Council which was reserved for a Sinhalese representative (and from 1890, a Low-Country Sinhalese, because another seat was created for the Kandyan Sinhalese). The Legislative Council had been established in 1833 and the three nominated seats in this institution, which were reserved

[80] A letter to the editor of the *Examiner* in 1888 quoted by Peebles (1973, p. 325). Emphasis added.

for a Burgher, a Sinhalese and a Ceylon Tamil, soon became coveted positions. Nomination was a valued mark of governmental favour and public eminence. The positions also carried a measure of political influence. Indeed they were, in some ways, strategic positions within the Establishment. Since the inception of the Legislative Council, the Sinhalese representative had always been a Goyigama. Indeed, with one exception (James Dehigama) arising from peculiar circumstances in the 1860s, the nomination had mostly fallen to members of one family from the 'first class Goyigama' in the Low-Country. This became so obvious over the time that it provided a useful handle for attack. From the 1870s, if not earlier, one sees persistent efforts by other families to overturn this monopoly. If these challengers included other Goyigama (e.g. William Goonetilleke in 1878), in the main they were drawn from the KSD caste elites. The means used were a combination of a well-supported petition, public meetings and agitation in the press or in periodicals. In the days before direct elections, these methods provided a useful form of elite lobbying and a substitute form of election campaign – one in which the arbiter was not the constituency. In 1881 S. R. de Fonseka and G. A. Dharmaratna (both Karāva), in 1888 Walter Pereira (Durāva), T. E. de Sampayo (Navandanna), James Peiris and H. Jeronis Pieris (both Karāva), virtually every one of them lawyers, were presented as suitable persons for nomination. From the 1890s it was largely the Karāva elite who made the front running in this attack on the monopoly of the 'first class Goyigama'. On every occasion when the moment for the nomination of the Low-Country Sinhalese member drew near, in 1894–5, 1900 and 1905, James Peiris was strongly backed for the post.[81]

From 1894, and perhaps even earlier, these campaigns were efficiently orchestrated and there were numerous public meetings and memoranda employed in their support. To illustrate with details from the campaign of 1894–5: between August and December 1894, nineteen public meetings were held in support of James Peiris' candidature at Wennapuwa, Negombo, Moratuwa, Kalutara, Panadura, Alutgama, Kosgoda, Ambalan-

[81] Jayasekera, 1970, pp. 125–34. Also see Labrooy, 1973, pp. 283–5, 409–23.

goda, Balapitiya, Welitara, Galle, Weligama, Gandara, Matara, Dondra and Tangalle along the southwestern littoral and in Kurunegala, Kandy and Matale in the Kandyan districts – that is, in the principal service centres and district towns in the Sinhala-speaking areas. These were capped by a public meeting in Colombo on 5 January 1895. The sponsors of these meetings were invariably Karāva notables, as were many speakers; but there were a few speakers and participants from other castes as well.[82] The ability of the Karāva elite to mount a campaign in some urban centres in the Kandyan areas is of particular interest: it reflects the 'diaspora' of Karāva merchants, government servants and independent professions to these centres. Again, it is significant that the Karāva elite were able to attract a degree of support, if in varying measure, from notables of other castes. Thus, in 1894 they had the backing of some leading Salāgama personnel (e.g. J. de S. Rajapakse, Peter de Abrew, A. E. de Silva, Dandris de Silva Gooneratne); and in 1900 the support of the Rajapakses (Salāgama), A. A. Wickṛemesinghe and D. W. Subasinghe (Goyigama) and Dr A. E. Roberts (Navandanna). Indeed they appear to have secured support occasionally from a few members of the Goyigama aristocracy: Nicholas Dias Abeyesinghe (of Galle) in 1894 and 1905, and W. C. Tillekeratne in 1894 and 1900 being examples. From the turn of the century, moreover, the Karāva elite were able to support these campaigns with the weight of editorial opinion in the English-media newspapers which they controlled: *The Ceylon Standard* and *The Ceylon Morning Leader*.[83]

The Goyigama aristocracy in the Low-Country in its turn began to mount counter-campaigns on the same lines. In 1900 they did so in support of S. C. Obeyesekere and were successful in securing the nomination for him. The interlinked families of the Obeyesekeres and Dias Bandaranaikes had emerged as the focal point of the 'first class Goyigama', replacing their relatives, the de Sarams and de Liveras, who had tended to be the

[82] *Collection of Reports of Meetings held in favour of Mr James Peiris' nomination as Representative of the Lowcountry Sinhalese*, Colombo: The 'Ceylon Examiner' Press, 1895. For lists of persons attending some of these meetings, see Roberts, 1974a, pp. 562–3; and 1977, pp. xxxvii–ix. For the reasoned Karāva case, see the *Ceylon Review*, vol. 3:1, 1894.

[83] Jayasekera, 1970, pp. 132–4; *Collection – James Peiris*, and 'Memorial of Undersigned Low-Country Sinhalese', encl. 1 in Governor to Sec. of State, no. 138, 5 Apr. 1905, CO 54 series.

nodal element in the first half of the nineteenth century. Despite mounting Karāva pressure, S. C. Obeyesekere secured nomination once again in 1905. This was an important Goyigama triumph.

Every Karāva campaign on this issue since the 1880s had ended in failure. Thus goaded, in 1906 the Karāva elite decided it was time that the Legislative Council was enlarged and reformed. Debarred from a prestigious and strategic post as a result of entrenched interests and arguments deriving from precedent, they decided it was time to change the rules of the game.[84] It is not insignificant that one of the first moves in this campaign seems to have been an article by F. J. de Mel, another Moratuwa Karāva, which presented a reform scheme; while Dr Hilarion Marcus Fernando visited the Colonial Office personally in 1907 and presented a memorandum. The most influential memorandum in this campaign was that presented on 12 December 1908 by James Peiris. It would be erroneous, however, to describe the constitutional reform campaign of 1906–9 solely in these terms. The Karāva elite themselves were undoubtedly influenced by the ideas of political liberalism and nationalism that had been slowly gaining ground in Sri Lanka, through cultural diffusion from western Europe and India. Nor were they alone in this reform movement. They had the support of several Burghers, the Ceylon Tamil elite, and a wide range of Sinhalese notables. The latter included influential Goyigama *arrivistes*[85] as well as members of the Goyigama aristocracy – among whom were the Coreas of Chilaw and E. W. Perera of the Senarat Mudaligē family of Kotte.

While the reform demands involved an attempt to reduce the width of British control, it is evident that the political influence of the 'first class Goyigama' was a prime target. It was certainly

[84] I follow, here, the interpretation presented by Jayasekera (1970, pp. 158ff, 184–6). For a minor amendment, see Roberts (ed.), 1977, pp. lxiv–lxv, clxiii.

[85] E.g., D. B. Jayatilaka, Emmanuel G. Jayawardena, Dr C. A. Hewavitarne, D. C. and F. R. Senanayake, E. J. Samerawickrame, C. Batuwantudawe, N. D. B. Silva, A. A. Wickremesinghe and (soon) D. R. Wijewardene. It is also arguable that the six Jayewardene brothers should be included in this list. Their great-grandfather had achieved headman rank through military service for the British during their wars of conquest. The Goyigama aristocracy, however, maintained their own social distinctions and believed that the 'first class Goyigama' in the Low-Country were only those who could trace their families through seven generations.

interpreted in this light by some Goyigama families. Though the reforms proposed were extremely moderate in scope, S. C. Obeyesekere, Dr John Attygalle and *Mudaliyar* John Abeykoon expressed strong opposition to these proposals. Attygalle ridiculed the low social status and caste of several reformist leaders and described the reform associations as mere debating societies and 'grotesque cliques'.[86]

The reform movement of 1906–9 gained a little ground. The British administration denied the claim of the political activists to be representatives of the people. That role their district officers and headmen fulfilled in satisfactory measure: so it was said. However, it was granted that there was a new and 'exotic' plant in Sri Lanka: namely, 'the professional and commercial middle classes' (alternatively: 'the educated class'). That class could have one seat.[87] This measly response was embodied in the collection of constitutional reforms which is known as the Crewe–McCallum reforms of 1910 and which came into operation in 1912. The reaction of the British officials in the island may or may not have been influenced by the opinions of the Obeyesekeres, John Attygalles and other conservatives. They were certainly influenced by the social conflicts of the preceding decades and the tendency of the Ceylonese elites to attach high value to appointments within the administration. In what seems a typical interpretation, a senior British official named Frederick Bowes later described the reform agitation of 1906–9 as something that was 'merely based on the jealousy of the rich low caste *parvenus* – who had made fortunes in arrack, plumbago, law or medicine', and as something that could easily be met: if one merely dispensed seats in the Legislative Council to 'a Peiris or a Fernando, nothing more would be heard of reform for five or ten years'.[88] In this regard there can be little doubt that the Crewe–McCallum reforms were truly 'a sop to Cerberus'.[89]

And as the time dawned for the election of 'The Ceylonese Member' (i.e. the 'educated Ceylonese seat') in December 1911, a Fernando did come forward: Dr Hilarion Marcus

[86] Jayasekera, 1970, pp. 175–84, 156–84, 156–8, 166.
[87] *Papers CHC*, 1927, pp. 6–10.
[88] Bowes and Arrows (*c.* 1924–5 and 1944), unpublished MS (autobiography), available at Rhodes House Library, Oxford, p. 228.
[89] Jayasekera, 1970, pp. 164–5.

Fernando, a University scholar of yesteryear, eminent physician and plantation owner, of the lineage Hettiyakandagē, linked to the Warusahännädigē de Soysas by marriage. For the most part, he had the backing of the Karāva elite; and also that of a few Goyigama *arrivistes*, for example the Hewavitarnes, Emmanuel G. Jayawardena, P. B. Ratnayake and L. B. Ranaraja. The old rivals of the Karāva elite, the 'first class Goyigama' and the Goyigama aristocracy in general, realised their electoral weaknesses. They promptly sponsored the candidature of Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan – an intelligent move in view of the large percentage (around 36 per cent) of Ceylon Tamil voters. Ramanathan also had the vigorous backing of another segment of the Goyigama *arrivistes* who had come into competition with the Karāva in the Colombo Municipal Council and in several voluntary associations in the 1890s and 1900s. In the Sinhalese areas, therefore, the contest became in large part a Karā–Govi conflict with Ramanathan commandeered as proxy for those segments of the Goyigama who sought to deny the seat to a Karāva. Thus, Ramanathan's campaign in these areas was marshalled by such staunch anti-Karāva personnel as *Mudaliyar* John Abeykoon, Dr John Attygalle, the Obeyesekeres and A. de Alwis Seneviratne (representing the Goyigama Establishment) and the Jayewardene brothers (representing some of the other Goyigama). It was also supported by an influential segment of the Salāgama who had fallen out with the Karāva in the 1900s, and on whose behalf on one occasion Francis de Zoysa assailed 'the ignominious ambitions of that caste clique whose God is mammon, and whose creed is the suppression of all other communities in the island.'[90]

To those versed in Indian historiography the absence of any reference to caste associations during the preceding discussions must have been striking. At about the same time in British India numerous caste associations appeared as the vehicles of caste advancement. In Sri Lanka associations with explicit caste labels were conspicuously absent. This can be explained. They were not needed. Notables from each caste took upon themselves the role of caste spokesmen; and the relatively good

[90] *Ibid.*, pp. 175ff; and Labrooy, 1973, pp. 409–23 (quotation, p. 419). Also see Jayasinghe, 1965, pp. 77ff; K. M. de Silva in *UCHC*, 1973, p. 387; and Gamage, pp. 283–4.

communication network in Sri Lanka encouraged caste lobbies to operate on an *ad hoc* basis. There were, moreover, several local or national associations in which caste lobbies had either a controlling interest or a strong voice. Indeed, there is room to agree with P. V. J. Jayasekera's contention that 'some of the provincial associations that emerged during the 1890s were essentially caste associations.'[91] The Moratuwa Association was a Karāva voice. So too, in Jayasekera's opinion, were the Panadura, Kalutara and Dodanduwa Associations. Such associations did not confine their deliberations to local issues. They regularly spoke out on questions of wider moment.

One could go further and argue that most of the *dāyaka sabhas* (or lay associates who supervise the affairs of the temple) in each neighbourhood served as caste associations.[92] Even though the temple congregations could be multi-caste, from the early nineteenth century many of these associations in the Low-Country appear to have been controlled by notables and *bhikkhus* drawn from a particular caste. Both examples of caste-oriented associations, the *dāyaka sabhas* as well as the urban political associations, present a contrast to the caste associations in India. They were highly localised, whereas the Indian caste associations attempted to be provincial organisations. Among the Karāva, this may have been a source of strength because it did not involve fragmentation and was not coterminous with endogamous and localised sub-castes. As the evidence in the next chapter will indicate, these localised organisations were linked by kinship and political ties among the elite leadership. The information that has been already provided in this chapter on the campaigns in support of James Peiris' candidature for the Legislative Council represents a concrete example of such linkages.

[91] Jayasekera, 1970, p. 46.

[92] This idea was first suggested to me by Prof. Bruce Kapferer, and is backed by his contemporary and historical information on several temples in Galle. Also see Malalgoda, 1976, *passim*; and Ryan, 1953, pp. 41–3, 270–1. Dr Martin Southwold has also related to me an instance that is similar to the case reported by Ryan: namely, a new temple being set up in the twentieth century by Baṭgama, Beravā or Wahumpura people because of slights met with at Goyigama-dominated temples. This sort of incident would have occurred much earlier along the sea coast. However, cf. Obeyesekere in Leach (ed.), *Dialectic in Practical Religion*, Cambridge University Press, 1968, p. 35.

At the same time, the Karāva elite had a powerful say in many of the central associations based in Colombo. By the 1880s it appears that the majority of members in the Ceylon Agricultural Association were Karāva and this association played a significant role in the engagements with Gordon. At the height of this 'struggle', this association was renamed the Ceylon National Association in a move that was promoted by a Karāva–Durāva combination led by Walter Pereira, Charles Peiris and S. R. de Fonseka.[93] It must not be too readily assumed that this organisation continued to be dominated by the Karāva from the 1890s through to the 1920s. That remains an open question for future investigation. But there can be little doubt that in the period dating from the 1880s to the 1920s the Karāva provided an influential component in most of the political associations which saw themselves as 'national' organisations representing general interests. Possessing such strategic positions, they found it inadvisable and unnecessary to form a national Karāva or Kshātriya Association. British and Burgher opinion looked down upon the manifestation of casteism in formal politics. In this context the Karāva leaders would have found it more advantageous to have a broader association in which they had a powerful say. That way, one could more easily deflect the stigma of being caste-minded. That way, one could attract Burghers, Tamils and other Sinhalese castes to one's cause. That way, one could attempt to advance on a broad front rather than a partisan line.

The Low-Country Products Association (LCPA) provides a good illustration of this policy. One of its chief objects was to counterbalance the interests of the British capitalists in the island, particularly as represented by the Planters' Association and the Chamber of Commerce.[94] From the outset, however, the LCPA spoke out on constitutional issues as well, and was disdainfully classified by one governor as a political organisation.[95] Its members included a number of Goyigama and other Sinhalese, besides persons from other ethnic groups.

[93] Jayasekera, 1970, pp. 126–7; Peebles, 1973, p. 303; and K. M. de Silva in *UCHC*, 1973, p. 243.

[94] J. Tyagaraja, 'A Brief Survey of Some of the Activities of the L.C.P.A. during the Last Fifty Years', *L.C.P.A. Golden Jubilee Number*, 1958.

[95] *Papers CHC*, 1927, pp. 5–6.

However, the Karāva predominated. When the Manning Constitution of 1920 recognised its political weight and demarcated a seat in the Legislative Council for an LCPA representative, the election of 1921 was to reveal how much of a Karāva pocket borough it was. Karāva predominance in this organisation was taken so much for granted that the Ceylon Tamil elite, who were anxious to have P. Arunachalam as the representative for Colombo Town, suggested to Sir James Peiris that he could serve as the LCPA representative. But the latter was not ready to beard the LCPA lion in the person of his brother-in-law (Sir) Henry L. de Mel, who considered the seat his prerogative.[96] In the final result, Henry de Mel became the LCPA representative and James Peiris the member for Colombo.

A number of Karāva were involved in the political activities of the Ceylon Reform League (1917–20) and the Ceylon National Congress (1919–50) during the 1910s and 1920s; and there were several Karāva among the handful of Sinhalese who secured seats in the municipal councils of Kandy, Colombo and Galle in the four decades extending from the 1890s.[97] In the municipal councils as well as in the December 1911 election to the Legislative Council the high educational qualifications demanded of voters undoubtedly worked to the advantage of the Karāva elite. The broadening of the franchise in 1920 and 1924, therefore, may have been of some disadvantage to the Karāva and may have initiated a lessening of their electoral weight.[98] At the September 1924 elections, in the eight coastal constituen-

[96] My interpretations from narrative related by Sir Wilfred de Soysa (interview, late 1960s).

[97] L. H. S. Pieris was even a member of the Kandy Municipal Council from 1876–80 (see the records of the Kandy Municipal Council and the *Centenary Volume of the Colombo Municipal Council*, ed. H. A. J. Hulugalle, Colombo: 1965). Also see Labrooy, 1973, p. 420.

[98] The qualifications for the vote, restricted to males, in 1924 were: literacy in English or the vernaculars Sinhala or Tamil; and/or any one of the following criteria: (i) a clear annual income of not less than Rs. 600; (ii) immovable property (in one's own name or in wife's name) worth not less than Rs. 1,500; or (iii) occupancy as tenant or owner of houses whose rental value was Rs. 400 p.a. or Rs. 200 p.a. according to their urban or rural location respectively. Registration for voting was voluntary. In 1921, 54,207 persons had registered as voters. In 1924, 189,335 persons registered. In contrast, the registered voters in 1911 numbered 2,957; and in 1917, 3,013. *Note*: The constitution of the Legislative Council in 1921 differed from that in 1924.

cies, six seats went to Goyigama notables, two to Karāva.[99] Within the Central Province, ironically, the Karāva still wielded considerable influence. W. A. de Silva, a Karāva Buddhist from Moratuwa and Colombo who did not even reside in the Kandyan areas, contested the by-election for the Urban Member for the Central Province in 1925, and won, defeating J. W. S. Attygalle. This triumph, nevertheless, may conceal an equally significant shift in the balance of power within the southwestern lowlands, the most crucial electoral arena till the 1950s. In retrospect, it appears that the elections to the Legislative Council in the 1920s witnessed a growth in the influence of Goyigama *arrivistes*,[100] and early signs of the way in which demographic strength would assist the Goyigama elites, aristocracy and *arrivistes* alike, in the future. It is not suggested that caste rivalries were the decisive factors in these electoral contests. Such conclusions are premature without detailed studies. What I wish to indicate here is the wider significance of the set of elections in the year 1924 – implications which caste-conscious contemporaries must have noticed. Indeed, the future possibilities and non-Goyigama caste fears had already been voiced in 1922 in a pamphlet presented by one *Mudaliyar* W. F. Gunawardena. Pointing to the dominance of the Goyigama caste in the Kandyan countryside, the ramified influence of the Siyam *Nikāya* and its 'central' bodies at Asgiriya and Malwatta, and 'the rooted hatred of the Karāvas' to which the Goyigama were prone, he argued that 'if political power in a pronounced form were to fall into the hands of this section or caste, both in the Kandyan and in the Maritime Provinces, then there will be no hope for the people of Ceylon outside this particular community'.[101] During the elec-

[99] *Ceylon Daily News*, 29 and 30 Sept. 1924; and data supplied by Vijaya Samaraweera. The Goyigama were: D. B. Jayatilaka and D. S. Senanayake (both uncontested), C. W. W. Kannangara, V. S. Wikramanayake, C. E. Victor S. Corea, E. W. Perera. The Karāva were James Peiris (uncontested) and C. H. Z. Fernando. The latter's victory over C. E. Corea for the Chilaw seat was a notable one.

[100] Besides some of those named above, the politically active Goyigama *arrivistes* in the 1920s included the Wijemannes of Kalutara, the Wijewardenas of Seeduwa and Colombo, D. C. Kotalawela of Badulla, A. A. Wickremesinghe of Kegalle, Durand E. Weerasooria, A. C. G. Wijeyekoon, E. A. P. Wijeyeratne, E. J. Samerawickrame, P. B. Godamunne, P. B. and A. Ratnayake, D. J. K. Goonetilleke and the Jayewardene brothers of Grandpass. Also see Marshall Singer, 1964, pp. 62–5, 159; and Ryan, 1953, p. 323.

tions to the Legislative Council in 1921, intense political lobbying behind the scenes under the guiding hand of F. R. Senanayake had diverted expressions of casteism so as to create 'an air of harmony' and unity; and thereby to convince the British 'of the great capacity on the part of the people to enjoy political freedom' (while also satisfying the idealists who regarded caste loyalties in politics with great contempt). Gunawardena's thesis was that this was merely a temporary expedient, and a manifestly fragile form of unity.[102] He was, in substance, correct.

In the meantime, Buddhist Karāva leaders were among those participating in the Buddhist attempts to rejuvenate Buddhism during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Since a number of Wahumpura capitalists, well-to-do Goyigama *arrivistes* and Salāgama rich were active in the Buddhist revitalisation movement, it is not possible to attribute to the Karāva elite the same catalystic role which they supplied within the constitutional reform movement.

For the most part, then, individuals from a number of castes linked hands in a common front in defence of Buddhism. This combination was not without its divisions. As with the movement for constitutional reform, the Buddhist movement was centred in the southwestern lowlands, where the new fraternities, the Buddhist lay intelligentsia and the Buddhist capitalists provided its motive forces – particularly after Colonel Olcott and the Theosophists stimulated the improvement of its organisational apparatus in the 1880s. The participation of Kandyans was limited, though a handful of Kandyan aristocrats supported the cause at various times, and in the early twentieth century such Kandyan *arrivistes* as the Ratnayakes, Ranarajas and Godamunnes added their strength to Buddhist activism. The well-endowed Siyam *Nikāya* revealed only a lukewarm interest and preferred to stay aloof.[103] Indeed, in the late nineteenth century, Olcott found that active support for Buddhist revitalisation in the Kandyan districts came largely from Karāva businessmen and was greatly angered by the

[101] 1975, pp. 53–4, and *passim*. Also see the *Kururaja Wansaya*, Oct. 1933, p. 59 (citation from Jayasekera, 1970, p. 497).

[102] 1975.

[103] Jayasekera even notes that the 'Kandyan hierarchy of the Siamese sect was at first hostile to the [Buddhist revivalist] movement', (1970, p. 59).

antipathy for these men that was shown by the Kandyan aristocrats and the Buddhist Establishment.[104]

Within the Low-Country, a division in the organisation of Buddhist resistance emerged in the 1890s and 1900s with the rivalry between the Buddhist Theosophical Society (BTS) and the Maha Bodhi Society. Each claimed to be the leading exponent of the Buddhist cause and had rival newspapers, but there were 'no deep doctrinal' issues on which they were divided. The rift was personal and familial; and, in Jayasekera's interpretation, was threaded by caste rivalry.[105] The Maha Bodhi Society was the Anagarika Dharmapala's child. Jayasekera notes that Walisinha Harischandra (Salāgama) was the only non-Goyigama to have a notable role in this organisation, an organisation that was closely associated with the Goyigama-dominated *pirivena* at Vidyodaya and the Siyam *Nikāya* in the Low-Country. He also stresses that, in contrast, the Salāgama had always maintained a strong position in the BTS, with Richard Adrian Mirando serving as its President from 1891–1914. His analysis could do with a closer examination. D. B. Jayatilaka, C. Batuwantudawe, the Ellawalas, the Senanayakes, D. J. Amaratunga, G. Don Julis Wijewardena, G. Weragama Bandara and other Goyigama notables were also involved in the work of the BTS in the 1890s and 1900s.[106] It is possible that Dharmapala's acerbic personality had more influence on this rift than anything else. Nevertheless, the threads of caste interest are discernible in the rivalry revealed by these two organisations over the selection of the Buddhist Registrar of Marriages in 1908. The BTS sponsored a Salāgama candidate named Andrew Perera, whereas the Maha Bodhi Society backed a Goyigama, albeit one who was a member of the BTS. This was not a trifling or coincidental event. During civil marriage ceremonies, Goyigama who held such posts were inclined to address non-Goyigama as '*um̆ba*', a derogatory form of address which aroused the latter's anger.[107] Caste spokes-

[104] Jayasekera, 1970, pp. 58–9. [105] *Ibid.*, pp. 67–8.

[106] C. Jinarajadasa (ed.), *The Golden Book of the Theosophical Society: A Brief History of the Society's Growth from 1875 to 1925*, Madras: 1925; Roberts, 1970b, pp. 13–22; T. W. Goonewardene and Henry Fernando, compilers, *Sinhalese Diary 1893*, Colombo: The Government Printer, 1892, pp. 75–87; and *T. Cent. Imp.*, 1907, pp. 489, 678–85, 762, 773, 901.

[107] Jayasekera, 1970, p. 68.

men and caste notables were sensitive to what were seen as derogatory terms. Even British officials were not exempt from sharp reactions when this occurred: so that the Karāva elite, led by the Moratuwa Association, responded angrily in 1900 when a Supreme Court judge named J. W. Bonser 'hurled an insulting remark' at their caste; and a Goyigama *mudaliyar* refused to comply with the orders of his superior and suffered dismissal in the 1830s because this British district officer addressed him as '*tamusē*'.[108]

In review

This chapter would have made it clear that social competition and tension between various caste elites was more or less continuous in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, though this did not prevent coalitions against the British. The rivalry between the Karāva elite and the Goyigama aristocracy was particularly pronounced. It developed out of two central features within the broader context of the institutional transformations and the growth of capitalism in British times: first, the resources, strategic positions, privileges and social prestige commanded by the Goyigama aristocracy as a result of pre-British legacies and the consolidation of this position in the early decades of British rule; secondly, the remarkable measure of wealth and the social mobility in a wide range of fields which some Karāva families garnered for themselves in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In this sense the actions of the Goyigama aristocracy in this encounter were largely defensive measures though defensive moves that allowed attack was one part of the defence. In contrast, the Karāva elite was pushing forward and seeking to dispel their situation of status inconsistency. So too were the Goyigama *arrivistes* of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, who had, in the same vein as the non-Goyigama elites, to face the social airs of some members of the Goyigama aristocracy.[109] In consequence, the competition between these *arrivistes* and the Karāva elite, which one begins to see increasingly from about the 1900s (if not earlier), was an encounter between two 'regiments' on the

[108] Anon., 1966; and Peebles, 1973, pp. 149–50.

[109] E.g. Ceylon *Hansard*, L.C., 11 Aug. 1915, p. 406; and Labrooy, 1973, p. 278.

forward march. Much the same can be said about the confrontation between the Karāva and Salāgama elites – an encounter which, increasingly, seems to have led the Salāgama to join forces with some of the Goyigama on specific issues.

This chapter would also have made it clear that the Karāva elite had their fingers in many valued pies. Among these was the constitutional reform movement of the early twentieth century. Their central and initiating role in the politics of reformist nationalism in the 1900s, as we have seen, was an outgrowth from previous unsuccessful efforts to secure a seat in the Legislative Council. The fact that these efforts met with no immediate success should not be permitted to cloud their significance. The agitations and demands of the Karāva elite were not isolated appearances. They bobbed up regularly. Even Dr Marcus Fernando's defeat at the 1911 elections for the 'educated Ceylonese seat' could only be achieved by a combination of Ceylon Tamils, the Goyigama aristocracy, some Goyigama *arrivistes* and a section of the Salāgama elite. Nor could the Karāva elite be denied the occasional and conspicuous social triumph. Their wealth permitted them to cultivate a conspicuous life-style and to command patron–client networks within which members of other castes were placed in employee or client situations. Their wealth also permitted the Karāva elite to acquire their own English-media newspapers long before the Goyigama elite did. Thus, in 1898 a consortium of some Karāva capitalists established the *Ceylon Standard* with J. G. C. Mendis as its editor, while E. L. F. and L. W. A. de Soysa (later joined by Charles Peiris) established the *Ceylon Morning Leader* in 1907.[110] In contrast, the Goyigama aristocracy did not have a major newspaper in their control though they had some access during the 1900s and 1910s to the *Ceylon Independent* run by Hector Van Cuylenburg. When the Goyigama received a newspaper voice, in 1915, typically it was an *arriviste* family, the Wijewardenes, who launched the *Ceylon Daily News* and the *Dinamina*.

The strivings of the Karāva elite were only too evident to contemporaries. Their involvement in the Buddhist revivalist and temperance movements was so pronounced that they fell

[110] Information from Ferguson's *Ceylon Directories*.

foul of the British during the Sinhalese–Moor communal riots of 1915. Many officials mistook these riots for rebellion against British rule. R. E. Stubbs, the Colonial Secretary, was convinced that 'the Organizers' were Low-Country Sinhalese: 'a set of skunks – mostly, I regret to say, men educated in Europe – one or two Cambridge men among them if stories are true.'[111] In the town of Panadura, as elsewhere, the Moors sought revenge through false testimony against the Sinhalese. Among those blackened and/or arrested were Harry and Arthur V. Dias (sons of P. Jeremias Dias), P. C. H. Dias, Walter and Richard Salgado and Dr Walter T. de Silva – every one of them Karāva. This prompted the Assistant Government Agent for the locality to postulate the theory of a general conspiracy against British rule with an added twist: 'the ringleaders would appear to be Buddhists of the fisher caste, who being possessed of too much money and cursed with a smattering of education, have become discontented with their surroundings and accordingly want to prove that they themselves were the real leaders of the island'.[112]

This sort of analysis reflects a theory of elite manipulation of the masses and emphasises the role of leadership groups. Similar assumptions governed the thinking of McCallum and Clifford when they analysed the movement for constitutional reform in their notorious despatch of 26 May 1909. Whatever the validity of these assessments in relation to the specific events to which they were addressed, they raise a question relating to the extent to which one is justified in speaking of a Karāva community in both British and pre-British times. This is a question which has been subject to debate in several historical and anthropological studies devoted to the activities of upwardly mobile 'castes' in the Indian sub-continent in the British period as well as the post-Independence era. This issue can therefore be set within the larger context of caste mobility studies in South Asia. That is the task of the next chapter.

[111] Private letter: R. E. Stubbs to Collins, 2 June 1915, bound with Chalmers to Bonar Law, confidential, 7 June 1915, in CO 54/353.

[112] Report of the Special Commissioner, R. A. G. Festing, from Kalutara, 12 July 1915, encl. 2 in CO 54/782, Chalmers to Bonar Law, confidential, 16 July 1915.

7

Casteism in South Asian politics during British times: emergent cultural typifications or elite fictions?

The story of the Karāva elite and their social and political operations is hardly an isolated case. In India as well changes in the distribution of economic and political power resulted in the emergence of elites among castes that were traditionally placed low in the ritual hierarchy. These men, too, were confronted by the dilemma of status inconsistency. In many instances they attempted to resolve this problem by championing the cause of their 'caste' and by adopting prestigious status symbols and pursuing those strategies which scholars have described as 'Sanskritisation' and 'Westernisation'. In many cases, they created a new organisational form to pursue these interests: a voluntary association which restricted membership to their 'caste'. These are known in the literature as 'caste associations'.

Among such cases, two which have received much attention are those of the Iravas (or Izhavas) of Travancore and the Nadars of the Madras Presidency and southern Travancore. These case-studies are noticed briefly in this chapter, not only because they provide interesting parallels with the Karāva case but also because they can be used as a point of entry to what is the central concern of this chapter: namely the nature of the links between elite and mass within such mobilised 'caste formations',[1] and the nature of caste consciousness and communal solidarity within such formations both in pre-British and British times. Such a concern is directed towards a formulation of an answer to the question whether caste conscious-

[1] This phrase is used as a generic device to encompass all levels of the segmentary structure of a caste and, at the same time, to serve as an equivalent of the word *jāti* (see above pp. 40–1). Thus, it leaves open the question whether each caste formation has a sense of community and degree of solidarity which justifies its description as a 'caste'.

ness can be regarded as a primordial[2] yet flexible identity with the ability to reproduce itself and perpetuate its relevance in radically changed contexts.

Caste and casteism in the politics of British India

The changes in Travancore society and the evolution of caste competition in the period from 1847 to 1908 have been recently described by Robin Jeffrey.[3] In the nineteenth century, Travancore was a native state governed by a Maharaja with the advice of a British resident. Ritual supremacy was held by the local Malayali-speaking Nambudiri Brahmins. But they constituted only about 1 per cent of the population and their privileges and landed resources were enjoyed by virtue of a cocoon-like role effected through their special relationship with the Nayars, a caste of clean Sudras who constituted the largest single social category in the state (perhaps 19 per cent of the population). The Nayars included a number of wealthy land controllers and were clearly the dominant caste formation within the province. While the Nayar elite behaved like an aristocracy and were supported in their privileges by the state administration, a significant number of administrative posts were held by non-Malayali Brahmins from other parts of southern India, and the Dewan (chief minister) was usually a non-Malayali. As matters stood in the 1840s, then, Jeffrey believes that the Nayars enjoyed unquestioned dominance. This dominance was all the more marked because of the social gap that separated the Nayars and the Brahmins, however poor they might be, from the other caste formations; and because of the extreme lengths to which custom went in marking out social

[2] 'Primordial' is defined in the dictionary as 'original' and 'existing from the beginning'. The term has been popularised by Geertz in his 'The integrative revolution: primordial sentiments and civil politics in the new states' in Geertz (ed.), *Old Societies and New States*, New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1963, pp. 105–57, where it is used with reference to the identities and feelings of ethnic groups and nationalities. The fact that I am transferring it to the context of caste sentiments does not mean that the loyalties evoked by caste and ethnic groups can be considered under the same theoretical framework (see n. 83 in this chapter). Nor do I wish the term to carry the notion of immutability that is conveyed by the dictionary and by Geertz's conceptualisation.

[3] 1976; and 1974.

distance and emphasising the degraded status of the non-Brahmin and non-Nayar 'castes' (i.e. the *avarna* castes).

From the mid-nineteenth century, however, Christian missionary education expanded in Travancore. Partly as a counter-strategy the Maharaja's administration established a large number of government schools. In the 1860s a reforming Dewan also initiated a road-building programme and effected a radical reform in the tenurial structure by converting the usufructuary tenant rights on state land (under which all 'private' land was enjoyed) into full ownership rights. Thus encouraged, Travancore was drawn yet more closely into the world market and several new money-making opportunities arose. The Nayars quickly took advantage of the state education system and consolidated their position within the administrative services. However, rather like the Goyigama aristocracy in Sri Lanka, they had 'fixed ideas about what constituted respectable employment'; and they took little part in trade or plantation business.[4] What is more, their matrilineal joint-family corporations, known as *taravad*, proved to be a considerable handicap in the new context, especially as the population began to expand. Adopting the lamentations of some contemporary Nayars, Jeffrey fixes on the cumbersomeness of the *taravad* and its susceptibility to disruptive internal strain as key features in the weakening of Nayar dominance. One manifestation was the entry of Nayar land into the market, where it passed into the hands of Syrian Christians or Iravas. By the 1900s, it is true, the Nayars still remained powerful as landholders and were ensconced in the administrative services, but Jeffrey believes that they were no longer unchallenged. Their sources of discomfort were the Syrian Christians[5] and the Iravas.

The Iravas were traditionally associated with toddy tapping and constituted about 15 per cent of the population. This

[4] Jeffrey, 1974, pp. 35, 108, 154. However, the Goyigama invested in plantations from an early date. The comparative methodology which I have used in chap. 8 *suggests* that Jeffrey might have paid more attention to this 'weakness' among the Nayars. However, it would be dangerous to force an argument on Travancore material on the basis of Sri Lankan analogies.

[5] The Syrian Christians were more powerfully placed than the Iravas. They are not brought into this summary because they were not strictly a caste, and because they always possessed social respectability (Jeffrey, 1976, pp. 18–19).

occupation served as 'cultural capital' in the nineteenth century when liquor consumption increased and there was a growing demand for coconut products in the world market. A significant number of Iravas moved into the cash economy. Several acquired a secondary education and by 1890 they had one arts graduate and one doctor. Few Iravas converted to Christianity, largely because conversion would have threatened their matrilineal family structure and easy-going marriage practices. But they clearly saw the missionaries as a potential resource, took advantage of missionary education and adopted some of the publicist techniques of the Christian evangelists. At the local level some Iravas even seem to have contemplated conversion and adopted a form of blackmail in their negotiations with high-caste Hindus by raising the threat of conversion.[6]

In comparison with the Karāva, the economic advances of the Iravas pale into insignificance. Nevertheless, their attempts to enhance their social status and sense of self-esteem were as pronounced. The Iravas were among the earliest of the *avarna* castes in Travancore who began to flout custom and wear an upper covering on their bodies. Though the detailed information which Jeffrey can provide is limited, it is evident that several local movements for self-improvement had made their appearance by the last decades of the nineteenth century. Eventually, in 1902–3, a small group of activists created a corporate (a limited company) religious organisation known as the Srī Nārāyana Dharma Paripālana Yogam, which became the organ of the Irava caste. Instrumental in this organisation were the single Irava doctor (P. Palpu) and an increasingly famous ascetic and religious teacher of Irava descent known as Sri Nārāyana Guru. From its inception the SNDP Yogam devoted itself to the task of removing the degrading and economically disadvantageous prohibitions to which the Irava were subject; it claimed their right to attend schools and visit government offices, to hold government jobs, to enter temples and to use roads. Jeffrey concludes that the SNDP Yogam was an outgrowth from the 'reservoir of Irava yearning and discontent' generated by the dialectical tension between the extreme disabilities they were subject to and the 'improvement in the

[6] Jeffrey, 1976, pp. 107, 130, 138–9, 145–6.

economic position of many Iravas' in the nineteenth century. It was 'an attempt to win social respectability'. As such, it was part of a broader tendency for the Irava to emulate the Nayars and to achieve a similar status.[7] Clearly, then, we have here a case of Sanskritisation mediated through the dominant regional caste formation, the Nayars.

The story of the Shanars or Nadars of south India has been related by Robert Hardgrave, Jun.[8] In the eighteenth century, the Shanars lived in large numbers in southern Tinnevelly District south of the Tambraparni River. They were internally differentiated into endogamous, named 'sub-castes', besides having sharp class differentiation in the form of a small class of lords or controllers of land and palmyrah trees. Their traditional occupation was that of toddy tapping. Even the proprietary class could not escape the low caste status and the disabilities associated with such a status. Following the Pax Britannica, however, the Shanars found new opportunities. They converted to Christianity in large numbers and established a working relationship with British and Catholic missionaries – a route of advance which provides a parallel with the Karāva in Portuguese times. At the same time several Shanar traders moved northwards beyond the Tambraparni into northern Tinnevelly, Ramnad and Madurai districts and established trading outposts. From the necessities of commercial activity and their position as a low status minority in these districts, the Shanar traders established 'a tight and cohesive organisation for the protection of the community', including *pettai*, or walled enclosures, and such institutions as a common fund (*mahimai*) and a caste council (the *uravinmurai*). As a 'class' of wealthy Shanars emerged, they began 'to seek social status commensurate with their rising economic position'. They promoted the adoption of a more Brahminical life-style, 'created a whole new mythology of their origins' as the original Kshātriya rulers of the southern districts, and claimed that they should be referred to as Nadars. In pursuing this strategy the new rich seem to have found their links with the south, where large numbers of Shanars were still engaged in toddy tapping, a great

[7] 1974, *passim*, esp. pp. 48, 52–9; and 1976, pp. 146–7.

[8] 1969. The quotations below are from pp. 99 and 262. The Nadars have also received considerable notice in L. I. and S. H. Rudolph, 1967, pp. 36–49, 92–7.

embarrassment. Some of them even sought to dissociate themselves from the Shanars in southern Tinnevelly.[9]

As a consequence of their Sanskritist strategy and their attempts to gain admission into temples, the Shanar–Nadars came into conflict with the higher castes in the districts of Ramnad and northern Tinnevelly – conflicts which took the form of celebrated court cases, assaults and riots. The strategy did not get them very far and, according to Hardgrave, in the early twentieth century they turned instead towards 'secular and economic goals'. The foundation of the Nadar Mahajana Sangam, an association 'which became the agent of community integration and mobilization' and worked for the uplift of the community, was a major landmark in this change of strategy.[10] Hardgrave, therefore, abides by the model of a temporal sequence in the evolution of casteism in Indian politics which had been emphasised by such scholars as L. I. and S. H. Rudolph, and William Rowe.[11] Another central note in Hardgrave's account is the emphasis on the absence of a 'self-conscious awareness of themselves as a community' among the Shanars in, say, the eighteenth century. It was only in the nineteenth century that such a consciousness began to emerge in the wake of the social and economic developments which his book delineates. In this sense the Nadar Mahajana Sangam was a product of this 'new consciousness' while yet working to further it.[12]

The caste associations formed by Irava and Nadar activists are illustrations of similar organisations which sprouted up in various parts of India in the late nineteenth century and made their presence felt in Indian politics, especially in the twentieth century. They have been viewed as interest groups called into a competitive existence by the revolution in communications and the transformation of the political order during the period of British rule, changes which cut across the territorial segmentation and localisation of caste in pre-British times.[13] From this foundation, Srinivas suggests that such activities are evidence of the resiliency of 'caste' (undefined). Implicitly, the argument

[9] Hardgrave, 1969, pp. 106, 264. [10] *Ibid.*, p. 262.

[11] L. I. and S. H. Rudolph, 1967, pp. 32, 36, 48; and Rowe, 1968a, pp. 204–5.

[12] Hardgrave, 1969, pp. 42, 262.

[13] Srinivas, 1962, p. 16; and 1967, pp. 89–90; cf. Gould, 1963, pp. 425–9; and 1971, p. 19; and Milton Singer in Singer and Cohn (eds.), 1968, pp. x–xi.

suggests that both in organisation and in caste sentiment the caste associations were an extension of traditional forms. While the Rudolphs have been at pains to emphasise the novelty (as voluntary associations, etc.) in the organisational form of the caste associations, they too have viewed these associations as a continuation of old identities and solidarities. The caste association is represented as 'an adaptive institution in which traditional and modern social features can meet and fuse', and as volatile evidence of the invalidity of any methodology which treats tradition and modernity as dichotomous types with an abyss in-between. In their view it has been a 'vehicle of consciousness and organisation' and functioned as a para-community which has bound previously autonomous *jātis* into geographically extended associations and which enabled its members 'to pursue social mobility, political power, and economic advantage'. By democratising and homogenising caste and by facilitating mass mobilisation the caste association has also contributed to the working of political democracy.[14] Like Hardgrave, the Rudolphs also argue that initially most caste associations focused on Sanskritist symbols and status-raising goals, but that their aims became increasingly secular. The caste associations, then, represent a 'democratic reincarnation of caste'.[15]

These writings have attracted a large body of criticism. Using data from social and political movements among some north Indian caste formations, Lucy Carroll[16] has revealed how one cannot identify a temporal evolution from Sanskritist sacred goals to Westernised secular aims because the strategies of caste associations were mixed, and because ritualistic symbolisation was sometimes evoked well after the stage when pragmatic economic advantages were at the forefront of associational activity. She indicates that several of the apparently Sanskritist ascetic reforms advocated by caste associations derived from the influence of Victorian puritanism and other Western values[17] (a point which recalls Obeyesekere's em-

[14] L. I. and S. H. Rudolph, 1967, pp. 29, 35, 36, 62–4, 97, 103.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 63. Also see their articles, 1960 and 1965.

[16] In three articles: 1975, 1977 and 1978. In these essays she also pinpoints factual and interpretative errors in William L. Rowe's presentation of the Kayastha movement.

[17] 1975, p. 78n; 1977, p. 363.

phasis on the Protestant influence on Buddhist revitalisation in Sri Lanka).[18] She is also adamant that, from their inception, the primary interests of most associations were 'economic' and 'educational'; and follows Mandelbaum in arguing that the battles over symbolic prerogatives 'overshadowed and masked' what were essentially power struggles.[19]

Carroll also calls attention to the difference between caste associations with some organisational continuity and permanence, and 'the miscellaneous ad hoc groups that came into being [decennially] to bombard the harassed [British] census commissioners with memorials and petitions'.[20] Richard Fox and David Washbrook take one of the themes developed by the Rudolphs yet further in arguing, against Srinivas, Ghurye and Nandi, that modern caste organisations are fundamentally different from the traditional, localised social organisation of caste; and functioned differently because they were active at a different political and territorial level, and within a radically different context.[21] In this sense, they were a predominantly urban phenomenon.[22] Their approach, therefore, not only takes note of the organisational form but also underlines the differentiating influence of the socio-political context.

Employing a rich body of material from the history of the Madras Presidency, Washbrook explains how very few 'castes' had the type of extended kin network and caste organisation at the level of a locality (whether village or sub-region) which could be developed into a provincial-level organisation. Mercantile castes and Brahmin castes which had specialised in the provision of administrative services were an exception to this rule. Thus, it was a functional necessity for each of the trading castes which made up the Komatis caste cluster to have extended kin networks and *panchayats* which mediated their activities within the sub-region in which they were resident. Once the improvement in communications and the penetration of market forces and state agencies brought locality and province into more intimate contact, it was possible for the sub-regional Komatis elites to effect political and marriage linkages and bring a Komatis caste association into being; and to use this

[18] Obeyesekere, 1970, pp. 46–7.
[19] Carroll, 1977, pp. 367–8.
[20] *Ibid.*, p. 365; 1978, p. 243.
[21] Fox, 1967b; Washbrook, 1975.
[22] Cf. Washbrook, 1976, pp. 135–6; and Hardgrave, 1970, esp. pp. 47–8.

organisation to *create* a Komatis caste, that is, a Komatis community that had not existed before. In similar fashion, subregional networks of Sri Vaishnava Brahmin families linked up through marriage alliances to form a 'provincial communal interest which . . . behaved like a caste association'. In these special cases, therefore, the 'local organisation of merchant and service [administrative] groups was, *in potentia*, the provincial organisation'. A new caste community involving the fusion of previously endogamous caste units could be formed without a major change in the structure of their social relations. This was not so for the majority of other named caste clusters, whether cultivator, landlord, artisan or menial. These caste clusters were as fragmented in pre-British times as the Komatis and Brahmins; and each caste unit was much more localised in its interests and marriage networks. An artisan caste cluster such as the Kammalas had 'no functional reason' for fusion in terms of their major economic and occupational interests. For such reasons, the revolution in communication fails to provide an adequate reason for the flowering of caste associations among such caste clusters during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[23]

Such case-studies are marshalled by Washbrook and Fox not only in opposition to Srinivas' argument regarding the resiliency of 'caste', but also against the Rudolphs' presentation of a line of continuous development from 'tradition' to 'modernity' via such mixed forms as the caste association.[24] In an incisive critique, Richard Fox also casts doubt on the explanatory capacity of the Rudolphs' thesis. He finds their argument marred by the lack of specificity in the concept 'traditional', and enquires whether the alleged adaptation of tradition occurred 'at the level of structure, or ideology, or function'.[25]

In relation to our story of the Karāva the most germane criticism pertains to the *loci* of group identity and the nature of caste solidarity. In further criticism of Srinivas and the Rudolphs, Washbrook argues that simply because the notion of caste can be found operating in the arena of the locality as well as the provincial-level activities of the caste associations, it does

23 Washbrook, 1975, pp. 153–167; also 1976, pp. 125–45, 261–87.

24 Washbrook, 1975, pp. 151, 174–5; Fox, 1967b.

25 Fox, 1967b, pp. 575–6, 579; 1970, esp. pp. 60–4.

not mean that the concept carries the same meaning.[26] He reminds us of several anthropological studies, including that by Srinivas, which reveal that the effective endogamous caste units were those which have often been referred to in the literature as 'sub-castes'. These were the true *jāti*, deserving definition as 'caste'. In southern India, in contrast with the territorially dispersed marriage patterns of the north, among most peasant castes 'endogamous sub-casteing was heavy, and territorially defined'. For such castes it was only at this level that community solidarity was found, for their collective consciousness had the solid foundations of kinship networks and even, perhaps, of caste *panchayats*. While bearing distinct names, however, such castes might share a common name and fall within a sub-regional caste cluster or a regional caste category[27] – as embodied in such terms as Reddi, Vellala, Nayar or Kamma; or even as Choliya Vellala, Gounder Vellala etc. These were no more than 'loose status categories' or 'status mega-categories'. They were amorphous, lacked any form of social organisation in their support and did not evoke a sense of community. The seeming identity embodied in a common label had, till modern times, 'only a metaphysical existence'.[28] From her study of the Kayasthas of northern India, Lucy Carroll endorses this point of view. She finds that 'beneath the veneer of theoretical categorization' the Kayastha 'caste' scarcely existed as an on-going community and possessed 'little or no social reality'. This was true even long after a few activists had got together, formed an association and tried to create a 'community'.[29]

On these grounds several works on the politics of caste, among them the books by Jeffrey and Hardgrave, have been assailed for assuming that the province-wide caste categories they are speaking about were cohesive blocs with a sense of community. In reviewing Jeffrey's book, Christopher Baker notes that Jeffrey's initial reference to the internal fragmenta-

[26] Washbrook, 1975, pp. 174, 176–7.

[27] For an explanation of these terms, see above, p. 40.

[28] Washbrook, 1975, pp. 168–9, 172–4; 1976, pp. 126–7, 129–30, 133–4. Also note that the Vokkaliga regional caste category (in Mysore) is described by Manor as 'a highly artificial entity' (Arnold, Jeffrey and Manor, 1976, p. 361).

[29] Carroll, 1975, p. 83; 1978, pp. 235, 248–9.

tion of the Nayars and Iravas is gradually effaced in the course of the narrative as the author 'moves towards a sort of anthropological determinism' and attributes a solidarity to these social formations which the details of the narrative undermine.[30] Washbrook's critique of Hardgrave is even more devastating. He fastens on the fact that the leadership of the Nadar caste association was taken by Nadar traders residing in towns within Ramnad District, towns which were separated from the natal area of the Nadars in southern Tinnevelly where the majority continued to reside:

[Hardgrave] bundles together a number of people who pursue different vocations in different parts of the country and have different ambitions, who have virtually no social contact with each other and who, if pressed, deny being connected to each other, and calls them a community. The reason for this is that they are historically related; yet unless they view themselves as related, possess ambitions in common, are reacting to similar stimuli, can we really call them a community? It is clear from Dr. Hardgrave's evidence that certain Nadars were established and flourishing in the Northern Tinnevelly and Ramnad area by 1821 . . . The Ramnad Nadars, who grew fat on trade, soon came to have very little in common with their cousins at home . . . There is little to show that [their] associations linked the towns even in Ramnad, nothing to show union with Southern Tinnevelly. Intermarriage between the two segments was rare, if known at all. For all practical purposes these Ramnad Nadars appear to have indulged in traditional forms of social mobility by physical mobility . . . While the Ramnad Nadars progressed, [their brethren in Southern Tinnevelly] continued much as before.

Hardgrave, in brief, has begged 'the whole question of what is meant by community'.[31]

In an essay devoted to the subject of caste associations, Washbrook offers an explanation for the appearance of such organisations in southern India in the late nineteenth century and their efflorescence in the twentieth century. His analysis emphasises the influence of four *inter-linked* factors: first, the improvement in communications and growth of literacy to which many writers had called attention; secondly, the material interests of rural and urban notables, ambitious young men

[30] *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 12:2, Apr. 1977, p. 309. Baker does not bring Jeffrey's previous article into consideration in this book review.

[31] *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 5:2, July 1971, pp. 278–9. Also Washbrook, 1975, pp. 175–6.

and educated publicists (e.g. lawyers and journalists); thirdly, the perceptions of Indian society held by the British which led to a simplification and redefinition of social categories; and fourthly, the eventual penetration of colonial administrative structures to the locality and the devolution of local government authority, processes which not only contributed towards the linking of locality and province but also structured the flow of resources.[32] The first and second of these factors need no elaboration, beyond the note that Washbrook describes how 'highly complex' relationships developed between the notables and publicists, and shows that several of these networks were active in nationalist and revivalist agitations. The third point is an amplification of ideas presented by Bernard S. Cohn, Marc Galanter and others regarding the influence of the 'official' view of caste through legal definitions and the operations of the census commissioners.[33] The British viewed 'caste' as a definable entity. This entity was, more often than not, equated with *varṇa* categories or regional caste categories such as Ahir, Bhumihar, Kamma or Nadar (Shanar). For the Madras Presidency, argues Washbrook, such organising concepts only began to exert a significant influence as the administrative framework grew more complex, penetrated the locality and brought with it resources and prestigious roles.[34] The official categories were bogus categories, crude generalisations without social reality. But they had the effect of bringing such categories into existence. The Indian elites were quick to respond in the British fashion and to manufacture such social units. The caste association was one of the initial steps in this process of manufacture, for 'the caste badge represented a ticket in a lottery which had many interesting prizes'.[35] Among the rich illustrations which Washbrook supplies in support of his thesis is a classic instance which is germane to one of our case-studies:

One of the clearest cases of the bureaucratically-induced caste association was that of the Nadar Mahajana Sangham. In 1910 . . .

[32] Washbrook, 1975.

[33] Cohn, 1968, esp. pp. 15–18; Galanter, 1968. William McCormack was one of the early writers who drew attention to the influence of the British legal system. More recently, Lucy Carroll has amplified both aspects.

[34] 1975, pp. 181–4; and 1976, pp. 263–4.

[35] 1975, p. 191.

> T. Ratnaswami Nadar, a millionaire *akbari* contractor, landowner and district board and temple politician from Porayar in Tanjore, asked to be nominated [to the Legislative Council] as a representative of his community, the Shanar/Nadars. The government replied that it could not support his application because he appeared to be backed by no organisation. Ratnaswami Nadar, forgetting that it was only twelve years since his family, in a celebrated court case, had disclaimed all connection with the Shanars, formed an association in the backgarden of his bungalow and took it to Madras city where the government could look at it. When he died, his association was cremated with him, and the Shanar/Nadars had to wait another five years before another magnate, W. P. A. Soundrapandian, resurrected it.[36]

In this fashion Washbrook is able to explain how it was that caste associations emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries among the generality of south Indian peasant and artisan castes. In doing so, he underlines the fact that these associations were not at the centre of provincial or district politics. The 'basic nexus of politics' was that of vertical patron–client relationships. These were often cross-caste and dominated by shifting opportunistic interests. It is the factional network which is the organising concept of Washbrook's analysis. Before 1920, therefore, 'the sub-regional varna level of activity was not an important political category' and caste confrontations 'owed more to rhetoric than to fact'.[37] The rhetoric was the creation of Indian elites, both notables and ambitious publicists. Far from being an extension of 'traditional' social organisation, in most cases caste associations were the novel creations of elites inspired by the administrative structures and the official view of caste, as well as their material interests. And 'it is by no means clear that their [the elites'] energy in pamphleteering and polemic made much impact on the less privileged members of their caste, who formed the majority and whose ambitions were limited by lack of power'.[38] In brief, he suggests that there was an elite:mass gap within most castes.

Washbrook's writings are among the best examples of the

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 189; see also 1976, pp. 264ff.

[37] *Ibid.*, 1976, pp. 126, 130–1. The factional politics of the Presidency are analysed in his book (1976) and the companion volume by Baker on *The Politics of South India, 1920–1937*, Cambridge University Press, 1976.

[38] Washbrook, 1976, p. 130.

Namierite[39] approach to Indian history which has been associated with the Cambridge 'school'. Though there is probably no direct influence, there is also much in his analysis which is reminiscent of another scholar with some Cambridge roots, the anthropologist Fredrik Barth, whose application of exchange theory and game theory in the anthropological field directed attention to individual strategies and the manipulation of values, and led to the elaboration of a transactional model of social relationships.[40] This serendipity is illustrated in Washbrook's use of such terms as 'transactionally-based factions' and 'grid', besides his heavy emphasis on ego-centred materialist pragmatism.

The historiographical gains from Washbrook's publications are many. Besides the ordering of a massive amount of information on Presidency politics, we have received an illustration of the way in which rural notables were drawn into increasingly higher levels of activity in order to protect or extend their local foundations of power. The importance of the British administrative framework – something underestimated by the Rudolphs for instance – has been underlined. In this way, Washbrook has provided a reasonable explanation as to why so many caste associations emerged more or less simultaneously at a particular stage of time in the history of India. Together with Fox, Carroll and Baker, he has also rendered a service by questioning whether the mere mobilisation of a caste name warrants the assumption of a group consciousness and pre-existing commonality, let alone an organisational structure in support of such an identity. They have reminded us to look behind the political rhetoric and examine the material interests and linkages of the caste spokesmen.

There remain problems. The Cambridge 'school' of Indian history has been criticised in its turn for taking cynical materialism to extreme depths, and failing to give adequate place to ideological principle in the history of Indian nationalism. Like Namier, it has been accused of taking 'the mind out of

[39] Sir Lewis Namier, whose range of interest was wide but is best remembered for his analysis of British politics in the eighteenth century.

[40] See his *Political Leadership among the Swat Pathans*, London: Athlone Press, 1965, esp. pp. 1–4; and Kapferer (ed.), 1976, pp. 3–8 and *passim*.

politics'.[41] These criticisms are of less concern here than the misplaced concreteness which permeates the 'Washbrook–Baker model of South Indian politics' (Gopal's phrase) and the sociological *naïveté* which enters their analysis at several points. I shall elaborate these additional criticisms with reference to the collective identity and solidarity of caste (*jāti*) in India, and with particular reference to Washbrook's views.

A critique of David Washbrook

It is typical that Baker should undervalue the evidence in Jeffrey's book, which points towards the existence of a collective caste identity as a consequence of common attributes and the prevailing forms of social interaction. This evidence is rather subdued and inadequately stressed, but it was there for any reader with sociological imagination to tease out.[42] In any event, the book should be read in conjunction with an article which Jeffrey had published previously. In the latter it is explicitly stated that the Iravas and the Nayars had certain 'common denominators'. Thus, the Iravas, whatever the endogamous 'caste' or 'sub-caste' they belonged to, shared common disabilities. The extreme, visually manifest nature of their disabilities must necessarily have underlined their identity, and provided the objective conditions for the sub-castes to view themselves as part of a larger entity. Looking back on his career, a mid-twentieth-century Irava politician, C. Kesavan, noted that 'just like saying a leopard cannot change his spots . . . I was not able to forsake my Irava-ness'.[43] Contrariwise and yet likewise, caste pride and common attributes linked the Nayar sub-castes. So did the behaviour towards them of other castes, neighbours and strangers alike, support a measure of commonality. As Jeffrey notes in his book, their 'internal divisions into subcastes were not readily apparent to other castes or

[41] S. Gopal in the *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, vol. XIV:3, July–Sept. 1977, p. 405. Also see Gyan Pandey's review of other books from Cambridge, *ibid.*, vol. XI: 2–3, June–Sept. 1974, pp. 327–8 and 337–8.

[42] Jeffrey, 1976, pp. xvii, 11, 14, 20, 29–30, 35, 114–17, 191.

[43] Jeffrey, 1974, p. 58. Unfortunately, Jeffrey veers towards the same theoretical failing as Washbrook (that of misplaced concretisation) and concludes that 'it would be wrong to think of Iravas before the twentieth century as a "community" unless one wished to use the word in a loose sense' (*ibid.*, p. 52).

groups who accorded all Nayars the same deference and respect'.[44] In this sense, each caste had a common place in the structure of discrimination and discriminatory interaction. Even the strikingly heterogeneous foreign or non-Malayali Brahmins, drawn from such dispersed places as Maharashthra, Mysore and Madras, were treated by the Travancore castes as one caste category. In consequence, they appear to have *begun* to band together socially.[45]

Jeffrey has also marshalled evidence to indicate that there were stirrings among the Iravas in various localities and 'local movements for self improvement' for some time before the SNDP Yogam was formed in 1902–3. On the basis of several case-studies, Arnold, Jeffrey and Manor have come out in support of my independent conviction that Washbrook's argument on caste associations has veered to the extreme. They suggest that several elitist caste lobbies were expressing 'the embryonic ideas of a far larger social group'.[46] However, what needs emphasis here is the fact that Washbrook's error of judgement on this point stems from more profound shortcomings in his sociological understanding of Indian caste and casteism in politics.

The structure of discrimination referred to above was not a purely localised phenomenon. The relations between Irava sub-caste A and Nayar sub-caste A (Washbrook's 'true' caste) in locality A were related to a larger regional frame of caste classification arising from the segmentary structure of Indian caste (and this was all the more so in Travancore because caste distinctions were enforced by the government).[47] There is an implicit and questionable assumption in the Washbrook–Baker model, probably deriving from the locality-centred functionalist studies of caste networks perpetuated by such anthropologists as F. G. Bailey and Edmund Leach,[48] which involves

[44] Jeffrey, 1976, p. 14. However, cf. 1976, pp. 11–12 with 1974, p. 52.

[45] 1976, pp. 114–15.

[46] Jeffrey, 1974, p. 58; and Arnold, Jeffrey and Manor, 1976, p. 354.

[47] Jeffrey, 1974, p. 39; and Baker in *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. II:2, Apr. 1977, pp. 308.

[48] Bailey, 1957; Leach, 1959, pp. 15–25; 1961b, pp. 5–7; and 1961a, *passim*. Note Leach's reference to 'caste feudalism'. The parcellisation of sovereignty and territorial fragmentation is a characteristic attribute of feudalism. Further note: Bailey and Leach differ radically on the question of cross-cultural extensions of the caste concept.

the compartmentalisation of south India into a patchwork design of territorial segments defined by the limits of localised *jajmāni* networks or the limits of the marriage networks of different castes. In fact, these localised (and inevitably overlapping) patterns, as well as the political segmentation into petty states, were penetrated and permeated by numerous 'indigenous channels of cultural transmission'[49] which maintained a two-way flow of values and messages between the cultural traditions of locality, linguistic region and Indian civilisation. McKim Marriott, Cohn, Singer, McCormack and others have shown that cultural brokers and specialists of various types articulated these networks, and in doing so interpreted, modified and reconstituted the values and messages to suit the context of their application. These brokers were not only religious specialists and genealogists. They included wandering minstrels, storytellers and troupes of actors as well as pedlars. Pilgrimages and pilgrim centres, religious festivals and fairs also served as modes of cultural transmission.[50] So, too, did saints and deities transcend the boundaries of marriage networks and political units.

Through these means the segmentary structure of Indian caste entered each locality. The villager was made aware of regional and *varṇa* categories and was taught to operate the concept of *jāti* in a multivalent way, shifting easily from one frame of reference to another. The villager was provided with 'mental orderings of the caste universe'.[51] These orderings enabled the villager to interact with strangers when he went to market or on a pilgrimage, or when strangers entered the little world of the village. However, the *varṇa* and regional caste categories provided much more than a basis for 'categorical relationships' of the type described by Mandelbaum (for India) or Clyde Mitchell (for the interaction of tribes in Rhodesian towns).[52] As Richard Fox, inspired by Dumont, observes, these

[49] Marriott, 1959b.

[50] *Ibid.*; Marriott, 1955; Cohn and Marriott, 1958; McCormack, 1958; and Milton Singer, 1972.

[51] Fox, 1967a, p. 303; and above, pp. 40–1.

[52] David Mandelbaum as quoted in Fox, 1969, pp. 28–9. Categorical relationships, according to Mitchell (1966, pp. 52–4), 'arise in situations where . . . contacts must be superficial and perfunctory' and involve the categorisation of relative strangers according to some visible characteristic and the ordering of behaviour in terms of

caste categories served as 'ideological models which provided culturally stereotyped standards to be absorbed by local caste groups'.[53] As such, they constituted 'cultural typifications': that is, basic ideas which are implicitly assumed by the members of a culture, ideas which give meaning to their actions and which enable them to interact with each other.[54] This formulation, it will be only too evident, is informed by the theories of phenomenological sociology which postulate that 'social reality is not reducible to physical reality' and argue that the subjective understandings of human beings structure their relationships with each other, so that social structures are the normative phenomena of social consciousness.[55] Therefore, a cultural typification is not a static, immutable thing, but has a '*becoming* aspect' – in the sociological jargon, an 'emergent' form. This emergent form stems from the relational nature of cultural symbols and the dialectics of the cultural order.

As cultural typifications, the *varṇa* categories, the regional caste categories or the sub-regional caste clusters were not a product of British organising concepts. These were indigenous identities which were picked up by the British and applied in a transformative manner in the sense that the colonial officials did not think in multivalent terms but preferred to have hard-and-fast concepts (as they did for land rights as well). As pre-British indigenous forms of thought, these regional and sub-regional categories were neither 'bogus' identities nor 'metaphysical entities'. They were infused with meaning. The meaning derived not merely from the Indian's ability to relate the familiar localised structure of discriminatory caste interaction to the several levels of the segmentary caste structure, but also from the pervasive influence of the Hindu religion.

such stereotypes. 'It is an essential of categorical relationships that the internal divisions within a category should be ignored.' This concept is part of a tripartite typology and is distinguished from 'structural relationships' and 'personal networks'. In the Indian case, however, categorical relationships are intimately connected with the segmentary structure of caste. Cf. Mitchell 1966 and Marriott, 1959a.

[53] Fox, 1969, p. 43.

[54] In this formulation I have benefited from the seminars at the Department of Anthropology, University of Adelaide, and from a discussion with Professor Bruce Kapferer. Cf. the concept of a 'root paradigm' that is presented by Turner, 1974, pp. 64, 67–8, 87–8, 96, 98; and that has been extended to south India by Appadurai, 1974.

[55] Tiryakian, 1970, pp. 114–19.

That is why the Jaisvara Camārs (Chamārs) of northern India expressed their ambitions through the Siva Nārāyanī devotional sect, a *bhakti* sect of medieval origin; why Camārs in modern times have built their identity and claims around such saints as Rai Dās (Ravidas) and Shiv Narain;[56] why Srī Nārāyana Guru was of central importance to the consciousness of the Iravas and the appeal of the SNDP Yogam; why the swamis of the Lingayat *mutts* provided the Lingayat caste category with a greater cohesion than that of the Vokkaligas of Mysore;[57] and why the Kanyaki Parameswami temples mediated the collective identity of the various Komatis sub-castes and provided stepping-stones for the evolution of the Arya Vaishya Mahasabha.[58] Again, Stephen A. Barnett informs us that the KVs – the Tonṭaimanṭala Konṭaikkaṭṭi Vēlālar Muṭṭaliyārs – of different districts in the Madras Presidency had 'very little if any contact' with each other till the early twentieth century; 'the only overarching institution was the caste religious retreat and residence of the caste guru (and the location of caste records) at the Sri Gnanaprakasa Swamigal Maṭam, in Kancheepuram'.[59] Such institutions were of central significance to the overarching unity and collective identity of a caste. Despite their fragmentation and internal status differentiation, the KV sense of community among the KVs, and the contribution of caste pride to this consciousness, was expressed in their saying: 'We are all like gold, some of us may be pure gold, some 18 carat, but we are all gold.' Besides such institutional foci, one has reason to suspect that the specialisations and hierarchical forms of the Indian cosmological order[60] provided centres of unity for caste clusters or caste categories,

[56] Cohn, 1955 and 1958; and Bellwinkel, 1976. Bellwinkel's article illustrates the choices and the flexibility which the cosmological order provides for Indians. Urban working-class Camārs in Kanpur have shifted allegiance and venerate Rai Dās (a Camār saint) rather more than Shiv Nārāin (a Kshātriya saint). This is part of a process of 'ideological Camārization' – the raising of Camār self-consciousness.

[57] Arnold, Jeffrey and Manor, 1976, p. 362.

[58] This is an interpretation of information in Washbrook, 1975, pp. 175–7. Also see below, p. 203.

[59] Barnett, 1975, p. 155. The quotation that follows is also from the same page.

[60] This world would include gods, demons, saints and mythical heroes. The phrase should not be confused with the so-called 'Great Tradition'. I do not agree with the dichotomy between the Little and Great Traditions, or between Sinhalese Buddhism and Sinhalese magical-animism, that is supported by such writers as Milton Singer

besides regularly reiterating the organising principles of caste, especially the opposition between purity and pollution.

It is for this reason that ambitious caste elites often chose religious issues as the points on which to challenge the existing order. The wearing of the sacred thread by Sudra castes in search of social status and social equivalence was a common means of initiating a status struggle with political implications. For Untouchable castes, temple entry provided a key issue for the same reason. Thus, in the relatively remote Orissan village of Bisipara the Boad Outcastes, having begun to improve their economic circumstances somewhat, were alive to the significance of the all-India campaigns on behalf of the Untouchables led by Gandhi and Ambedhkar; and in 1948 they came in a body to one of the temples to demand entry. The dominant Warrior caste successfully resisted this challenge by threat of force and, with the collaboration of other village castes, including other Untouchables, exercised further sanctions by depriving the Boad Outcastes of a minor source of revenue associated with their traditional right to provide music at village festivals.[61] Again, ambitious publicists and the rising young intelligentsia sought linkages with rural magnates by appealing to caste mythology and to such sentimental issues as Hindu revivalism[62] because they were aware that such traditional beliefs carried meaning and tapped existing values.

In stressing that caste histories served to identify and define a 'community' and that such community-building was a major aim of caste associations, Lucy Carroll has made a valid point.[63] Where she is wrong is in the generalisation that these associations were attempting 'to create' a community or the illusion of a community – a generalisation that stems from the same methodological shortcomings as Washbrook's approach. The argument that I have constructed above would suggest that the caste associations sought to consolidate and strengthen a pre-

and Michael Ames (1963). In this regard, see Obeyesekere (1963); Yalman (1964); and Gombrich (1971).

[61] Bailey, 1957, chap. 11, esp. pp. 220–7. For other illustrations, see L. I. and S. H. Rudolph, 1967, pp. 41–8.

[62] See Washbrook, 1975, pp. 176–8. Carroll has a neat little suggestion about the manner in which the attempts of north Indian Hindus to define themselves in opposition to the Muslims and the British contributed towards the emphasis on 'Sanskritic' reforms (1975, p. 82).

[63] 1975, p. 83 and 83n.

existing indigenous notion, a collective identity that was one part of a segmentary structure of identities. Each caste association was therefore working upon an initial seedbed, or, to change metaphors, extending a beachhead – a beachhead which had directed the strategy of the activists by its pre-existence as a cultural typification. To be sure, the collective identity associated with either a sub-regional caste cluster or a regional caste category was *different* from that of an endogamous localised sub-caste or caste; and lacked the same degree of solidarity. However, it would be misleading to describe such a collective consciousness or sentiment of community as 'loose', if by 'loose' is meant 'weak'. On the contrary, it operated at a level of generality that gave it flexibility and durability. This is a characteristic feature of a cultural typification – its ability to combine dynamism with a timeless durability rooted in its constant re-constitution and reproduction.

Within India, it is possible to discern a useful, if speculative, illustration of the strength of such collective identities in Richard Fox's delineation of Rajput–state relations in northern India. He observes that even when a Rajput lineage and its chieftain were decimated and dispersed by the external force of a state, genealogical reckoning and identities in terms of caste and sub-regional *varṇa* remained as residual elements. Castes persisted 'on the basis of sentiment, trappings and the institutional husks of endogamy and exclusiveness' – that is, within an attributional framework rather than the foundations provided by 'traditional interaction'. This involved an ideological commitment to the Rajwar, Chauhan or Rajput model. He concludes that the 'continued ideological identification at regional levels could never be effaced by the state in traditional northern India'.[64] Pursuing this line in a review of studies of overseas Indians in Africa and elsewhere, he endorses Leo Kuper's suggestion that 'caste consciousness may exist when the caste structure is absent'.[65]

The elaborations of the nature of caste identity in India, and its dynamic yet primordial form, enable us to pinpoint some of the failings in Washbrook's approach. A minor point of criticism can be dispensed with first. Washbrook cites several ex-

[64] 1971, pp. 168–9; and 1969, p. 71. [65] Fox, 1969, p. 66.

amples of rural castes (including the Nayars) which were open to the entry of outsiders in the nineteenth century and before, and other examples of caste segments which broke away from their parent body and successfully became a new, higher status caste.[66] To him, such instances are proof of the weakness of caste identity and caste solidarity. This view fails to see that the passing of *individuals* from one caste to another through spatial mobility and genealogical manipulation reaffirmed and emphasised the ideology of caste.[67] The value of the new identity was 'proclaimed'; and one suspects that those who 'passed' in this manner revealed the articulate commitment to their new group identity which is so general among new recruits to a reference group.[68] Likewise, the formation of a new caste through the process of fission involved the loud affirmation of a new collective identity.[69] This could not but influence the collective consciousness of neighbouring castes, especially those whose status position was threatened by the emergence of a 'new' force. By way of a generalised embellishment, it could be noted that even factional rivalry *within* a mobilised regional caste *could* redound to the benefit of caste solidarity; where the factions were competing for leadership in terms of caste interests, the weakening of the caste as a unit in political interaction would be accompanied by a heightening of caste consciousness. Such an intracaste factional struggle related only to the strategies to be pursued (the means) and who should direct them, not to who would benefit (at least at the rhetorical level).

Washbrook reveals an obsessive concern with the internal organisation of caste as a political unit, to the relative neglect of the influence exerted on the members of such a unit by the structure of discrimination within their field of experience, a field which was not merely determined by economic, political and social institutions and transactions, but which was also permeated by cultural typifications. Washbrook simply cannot conceive of corporate consciousness and communal solidarity without some concrete organisational foundations, whether in the form of marriage networks, *panchayats*, associations or interlocking patron–client networks. Without such institutions a

[66] 1975, pp. 168–9; and 1976, pp. 128–30.

[67] This is also the message in Yalman, 1961; and Leach 1961b, pp. 3–4, 7–10. See above, pp. 38–9, 62. [68] Merton and Rossi, 1957. [69] E.g. see Sanyal, 1971.

regional caste category or sub-regional caste cluster could not be 'an important political category'.[70] In effect, for Washbrook, ideology is totally derivative. His approach is characterised by misplaced concreteness[71] and crude materialism. This is a severe comment. Let me supply apt illustrations by beginning with an extensive quotation from his article on caste associations:

> It is certainly undeniable that, at any time in the recent pre-British past, considerations of status and identity could provoke political cleavages, particularly in the locality. However, it would be impossible to say that, therefore, these statuses and identities outlined political communities *which were internally organised for the benefit of members* . . . this would mean that somehow one and the same man – say, an Indian, Hindu, Telugu, Kamma – was a member of four different communities, each of which involved him with a different set of people. Clearly, such an argument would render the concept of community useless for analysis.[72]

Herein, we see a passing indication (italicised) of his misplaced concretisation in combination with a Eurocentric view which regards loyalty in either/or terms. Such perceptions cannot comprehend the possibility of 'situational selection' in belief systems.[73] In the light of the segmentary structure and the multiple referents of the Indian caste system that have been described in chapter three, in fact multiple loyalties were a rooted feature of the Indian scene. As stressed earlier, it was possible for a south Indian Brahmin to be Vadadesha Vadama, Vadama, Smartha, Brahmin, Tamil and Indian on the same day if different contexts and oppositions called forth these identities. Nor would the recognition of these multiple loyalties necessarily 'exclude the economic and political relationships which men obviously had outside the lines of these communities' as Washbrook thinks it must.[74]

[70] Washbrook, 1976, p. 131; also pp. 127–8, 134, 142, 145; and 1975, pp. 156ff, 200 n93.

[71] This is, I believe, A. N. Whitehead's phrase. Cf. a similar criticism levelled against Meillassoux (1973) by Barnett, Fruzetti and Oster (1976, pp. 641–4); and against Kathleen Gough by Barnett (1975, pp. 172–3). Also see Tiryakian, 1970, pp. 119–20.

[72] 1975, p. 179. Emphasis added.

[73] See Evans-Pritchard, 1937, pp. 142–50, 263–6; 1940, p. 540, *passim*; and Gluckman, 1956, pp. 86–8.

[74] Washbrook, 1975, p. 180 – a statement that follows immediately after the quotation cited above. Also see Washbrook, 1976, p. 264.

Washbrook's confusions and his neglect of vital dimensions are laid bare in one of the remarks with which he prefaces his article. 'This essay', he states, 'is intended as a contribution to history, not to social anthropology, and it is not concerned with the "inner meaning" of the caste system'.[75] It need hardly be emphasised that 'meaning' is central to identity, loyalty and above all to motivation. It is therefore pertinent to behaviour and thus central to history. It links history, social anthropology and sociology, and resists the type of separation between these disciplines which Washbrook postulates.

A more specific illustration of his intermittent yet not infrequent devalorisation of the ideological dimension is provided by his interpretation of the Komatis case-study. In detailing the situation of the Komatis caste cluster in the early mid-nineteenth century, Washbrook stresses that they were fragmented into localised castes. Though they 'possessed *a common ritual tradition* symbolised by their Kanyaki Parameswami temples, [as long as] the possibility of *regular contact* between local groups was limited, this line of connection was of only theoretical significance'. Thus, 'save for a single caste *shrine*, they had no supra-local *organisation* which could relate local communities to each other'.[76] In other words, there cannot be a community without regular contact and an organisational network. The central caste shrine at Penukonda, the network of temples and the common ritual tradition, taken in themselves, are dismissed as unimportant. The symbolic religious mode of integration and centricity is valueless in itself.

These, then, are clear illustrations of the inadequate weight which Washbrook attaches to the cultural order.[77] In this sense, a Weberian sense that differs from the thrust of Gopal's criticism, he has tended to take 'the mind out of history'. In amplifying an alternative approach to caste identities and collectivities which takes note of the cultural order, this chapter does not attempt to move to the other extreme. The explanation

[75] 1975, p. 151. [76] *Ibid.*, pp. 153–9, emphasis added. See above, p. 198.

[77] Christopher Baker has also been criticised for his neglect of the cultural order and his lack of understanding 'of the sociology of Madras provincial society' – shortcomings which contribute towards a 'reductionist approach to ideology' and a 'trivialization' of political analysis (see Marguerite Ross Barnett's review in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. XXXVII:2, Feb. 1978, pp. 374–5).

provided in the previous paragraphs does not deny the significance of the revolution in communications, the self-interest of notables and publicists, the simplified organising concepts of the British and the penetration of the locality by the state agencies, with their attendant reconstitution of the spoils system, in the constellation of factors which began to render the regional and sub-regional caste collectivities of increasing importance in the politics of south India. Nor does my interpretation deny the changes that were brought about in the morphological structure of caste as a result of these processes. Insofar as the focus of collective consciousness was increasingly centred upon one level of the segmentary structure of a particular caste – usually the sub-regional caste cluster or the regional caste category – this process tended to lead to the fusion of sub-castes (a feature that has been recognised by Srinivas, the Rudolphs and many other writers). It also promoted the conflation of the segmentary structure and the reduction in its 'boxes' and levels.[78]

This process of fusion, and the concomitant conflation of segmentary levels, is related to a more profound change in the Indian caste system that has been identified and elaborated by Stephen A. Barnett, and been conceptualised as the 'substantialisation' of caste.[79] The idea was briefly presented by Dumont[80] and Barnett's extension is informed by the Dumontian view of 'structure' as a set of relational principles which organise and give meaning to the components or elements in a social system, and which order the relationship between the elements and between the elements and the whole (rather than the more morphological understanding of 'structure' in terms of an identification of attributional and relational elements which has dominated our discussion thus far). However, Barnett implies that substantialisation began to occur in India much earlier than Dumont would allow for and argues that it has penetrated the crucial realm of ideology – the 'structural

[78] Fox, 1969, pp. 34, 38.

[79] 1975; and 1973. These views seem to be anticipated in germinal form in Marriott, 1959a, pp. 105–6; and Fox, 1970.

[80] 1972, pp. 274–5. In my understanding of Dumont and Barnett I have been greatly assisted by my association with Dr John Gray in teaching work on South Asia and I am indebted to him for specific communications on this point.

universe encompassed [and permeated] by Brahmanical concepts'. It is a fundamental change in itself and it paves the way for yet more fundamental changes.

The concept of substantialisation derives from the distinction between 'substance' and 'code' in kinship systems that was formulated by David Schneider. 'Substance' refers to one's 'natural' identity – in the Indian case, the quality of one's blood as bilaterally transmitted by both parents. The quality of the blood, its relative purity or pollution, is not fixed but fluid. It is dependent on one's life-style and one's transactions with members of other castes. In brief, it is moulded by one's code of conduct, or 'code'. In the past, substance and code were inextricably linked together and the relative purity and ritual rank of a caste was determined by the nature of its transactions and its life-style. Individual transgressions of the caste code were dealt with through sanctions of various types – themselves a transactional means of maintaining a transactional code. Barnett uses a case-study (the KVs of Madras) to describe a process whereby a caste in the course of fusing its sub-caste fragments through interdistrict marriage also de-emphasised the code of conduct (with the single and vital exception of marriage); and even used counter-sanctions against the orthodox diehards who tried to ostracise the politicised magnates who were carving out these new frontiers. In consequence, substance and code were separated. The purity of a KV was defined by his parentage or 'natural' identity. It became inviolable.

If such a change has occurred among several interacting castes,[81] it would amount to a significant change in the Indian caste system, at once ideological and behavioural in its significance. It implies a validation of caste rank by reference to a caste's attributes rather than its transactions with neighbouring castes. As Barnett suggests, substantialisation paves the way for such practices as 'compartmentalisation' and 'vicarious ritualisation', which have been described by Milton Singer and others.[82] He also argues that it clears the path for the

[81] Barnett does not attempt to show that substantialisation had occurred among other castes in Madras city with whom the KVs were in interaction.

[82] Milton Singer, 1972, pp. 315ff; Gould, 1965; R. S. Khare, 1971; and Barnett, 1975, pp. 166ff.

further evolution of classes in the sense of classes with an awareness of themselves and their antagonistic positions (*Klasse für sich*). This does not, according to Barnett, mean that castes are in the process of disappearance, but that the caste system, as 'relational universe of structure' involving interdependence, is on the way to dissolution. Castes remain as componential husks with a different significance. They tend towards competitiveness rather than interdependent transactions. They can then be politicised and ethnicised. Indeed, Barnett goes on to make the dubious suggestion that, in such circumstances, castes resemble ethnic groups.[83]

These latter remarks lead to topics which cannot be discussed here; but the concept of substantialisation has been described because it may be relevant to developments in Sri Lanka and the discussion that follows. In the final section of this chapter, the insights gained from the survey of casteism in Indian politics are selectively employed in the analysis of caste consciousness and the nature of elite:mass links among the Karāva.

The case of Sri Lanka and the Karāva

One is tempted to wonder whether, in the process of cultural diffusion and migration from India to Sri Lanka, the organising principles of caste had *become* substantialised. Such a notion must be presented as an 'outrageous speculation', because there is evidence to the contrary. For instance, we have seen in chapter three that rules of commensality governed caste transactions among the Sinhalese in the past and that these had persisted into the twentieth century. From their studies of villages within the former Kandyan Kingdom, Yalman and Leach insist that 'much of the "ideology" of caste remains'.[84] But Yalman's description of castes in a Kandyan village is directed towards establishing the manner in which these castes

[83] 1975, pp. 170, 164. On this point his stance brings him into agreement with Carroll (1977, pp. 368–9) and Washbrook (1975, *passim*; and 1976, chaps. 3 and 7) in that they place casteism and ethnic loyalty within the same rubric. I consider this theoretically unsound, but would need a great deal more space to develop this argument than is available to me here. Cf. Dumont, 1972, pp. 287–307; and Holmstrom, 1972, p. 769.

[84] Leach, 1961b, p. 3; and Yalman, 1961. Quotation from Leach.

are differentiated from each other through their family names, their place of residence, their occupation and the 'communal distinctions' enforced by endogamy and kinship. It would not, therefore, be incorrect to say that the theoretical perspective which informs the statements of Yalman and Leach *in these early writings* leans towards a morphological and attributional concept of 'structure' rather than towards Barnett's Dumontian outlook. In this light, Yalman's argument that pollution ideology attaches to such attributes as family name and place of origin is suggestive of substantialisation. Again, while the 'code' pertaining to sexual liaison between high caste women and low caste men was as rigorously maintained as in India, the rules of commensality among the Sinhalese were less strict and open to manipulation. An early-nineteenth-century authority even noted that the custom decreeing that a high caste person should not eat at the house of a low caste person was 'considered of no great importance and [was] easily overcome by denying or falsifying the Slander [i.e. the charge]'.[85]

In the context of this speculation, the liturgical and bureaucratic nature of the Sinhalese state that was outlined in previous chapters assumes significance.[86] Insofar as several castes were organised as state departments (*badda*) for periodic corvée duty, it would seem that the cultural typifications relating to caste were institutionalised and that each caste was treated as a unit, or a confederated unit made up of sub-units. The implications of such institutionalisation were at their most profound for those castes which were not involved in state rituals centred around the king, or in the village rituals around the temple or the local Goyigama aristocracy. Taking our lead from Ralph Pieris, it has been argued in chapter three that the intervention of the state involved the secularisation of the K S D castes.[87] The colonial powers did not alter this process. They took it further: their classificatory inclinations even sharpened the emphasis on castes as 'blocs of people' or units of administration. In this

[85] D'Oyly, ed. L. Turner, 1975, p. 54.

[86] See above, pp. 3–7, 39, 48–51. It will be recalled that Dumont calls attention to these features in support of his opinion that the caste system in Sri Lanka was 'different' from that of India; and was at best a quasi-caste export from India (Dumont, 1972, pp. 262–263). In these terms, my speculation appears to be less 'outrageous' than at first sight.

[87] See above, pp. 48–9.

sense, secularisation may be said to have contributed to substantialisation.

Whatever one might think of the conjecture that the caste system in Sri Lanka was substantialised, and whether or not one adopts a Dumontian perspective, it should be evident that the institutionalisation of caste by the Sinhalese and colonial states must have stimulated the growth of caste consciousness and provided castes with a measure of cohesion. The absence of *territorially defined* endogamous sub-castes among several castes (including the KSD) and the principles governing the organisation of Sinhalese marriage[88] contributed towards such cohesion. Even where sub-caste divisions were supported by principles of endogamy (e.g. among the Salāgama), the absence of territorial localisation in the pattern of one sub-caste:one locality set up conditions that encouraged the dispersal of marriage connections. This is why considerable emphasis has been attached in this study to Yalman's analysis of Kandyan (i.e. read Sinhalese) marriage principles and his illustration of the manner in which they worked towards kin-focused caste exclusiveness and caste centricity. The nature of these principles explains the absence of caste *panchayats* – an institution which appears to have both reflected and furthered the fragmentation of each caste formation in south India. The only restriction on spatially wide-ranging marriage links, therefore, was that of communication technology. Folklore and other scraps of evidence relating to marriage connections between the Goyigama aristocracy in the Kandyan and Low-Country districts in pre-British times[89] suggest that this obstacle was not as overwhelming as one might suppose. But for our purposes the point of interest is the *potentiality* for cross-regional and highly dispersed marriage networks. It has been shown in previous chapters that the Karāva were among the earliest Low-Country Sinhalese to make use of the coastal sea-lanes and inland waterways in Portuguese and Dutch times, and had even established trading settlements in the Kandyan country by the late eighteenth century – well before the improvements in overland communication. From the middle decades of the

[88] See above, pp. 38–9.

[89] Author's conversations with Mr Sam Wijesinghe; and *The Dassenaike Family of Hapitigam Korale*, Colombo Apothecaries Co. Ltd, 1923.

nineteenth century, certainly, there is abundant evidence of Karāva from the villages and towns in the south establishing marriage connections with Karāva families in Moratuwa, Panadura and Colombo; and conversely, if to lesser extent, of families to the north of Colombo effecting links with those in such places as Colombo and Kalutara.[90] The genealogical tree of the Weerasingha Parakramasuriyas (pseudonym) of Tangalle, stretching back four generations, has branches in Tissamaharama to the east and in Colombo to the west and north, with an increasing tendency by the mid-twentieth century to concentrate in Colombo (without, however, severing their interests in Tangalle).[91]

In this connection the bilateral nature of Sinhalese inheritance and the power of Sinhalese womenfolk relative to those of India must be taken into account. Before the twentieth century it was the practice for Sinhalese girls to be married off at an early age. This meant that a good number outlived their husbands. These dowagers fulfilled pivotal roles in the economic and social networks of Sinhalese families;[92] and often controlled unpartitioned properties in the natal village. Where members of an elite family had utilised these local economic interests as a springboard for their social advances, they would not be easily permitted to forget it. In any event familial loyalties were such that a dowager residing in an obscure village in the interior, or along the coast, would function as a focal point for children and grandchildren who had moved into urban centres in the course of their social advances. It was a common practice among Sinhalese, whether Buddhist or Christian, for the various branches of a family to assemble at their natal home for the Sinhalese New Year ceremonies. It follows that this custom, and the influence of dowagers and elders, supported the cohesion of spatially dispersed kin among the Sinhalese in general, and therefore among the Karāva as well.

The dispersal of marriage connections is both implicitly and

[90] E.g. J. Vincent Mendis, 1968, p. 11; *T. Cent. Imp*, 1907, pp. 546, 550, 648–9, 655, 659, 666–7, 671, 680, 698, 708, 730, 746, 758, 901; below, pp. 260, 272; and genealogies of the Warnakulasuriya Gunasekera–Jayasuriya–Jayewickrema families of the Southern Province; and the de Anderado–de Rowel–Lowe–de Fonseka families of Negombo and Kalutara. [91] Roberts, 1974a, pp. 567–9.

[92] This idea was first suggested to me by Professor Bruce Kapferer; cf. Tanner, 1974.

explicitly recognised by Washbrook as a determining influence on caste solidarity. In referring to Richard Fox's material on the Rajputs he grants that in northern India 'the identity of the Rajput was exceptionally clear, both to the Rajputs themselves and to others, and was internally reinforced by broad exogamous patterns of marriage and by regional dowry systems'.[93] He makes this an exceptional type of case for south India. For Sri Lanka, *mutatis mutandis*, it was (is) the rule.

However, for the Karāva caste consciousness was not solely the product of their social organisation – their marriage networks, their 'pooling' economic activities and their institutionalised caste headmen. As with the Iravas, the Karāva down the length and breadth of the southwestern coast were enmeshed in a structure of discrimination and were involved in dialectical interaction with the Goyigama, Durāva, Salāgama, Beravā, Navandanna, Wahumpura and other castes. In chapters three and four, the disabilities borne by the non-Goyigama castes have been illustrated. The stigma attached to their 'natural occupations' (the words of a Goyigama headman) and the symbols of social distance emphasised their subordinate station and delineated their caste boundaries. It would be erroneous to suppose that the only individuals to resent such degrading attributes would be the men of ambition – the caste headmen, schoolteachers and new rich. In certain contexts the ordinary Karāva or Salāgama man or woman was as likely to resent derogatory forms of address or such epithets as 'Kevulā' or 'Hāli'.

The influence of such transactions and symbols aside, the gods, demons and symbols of the Sinhalese Buddhist cosmological order regularly perpetuated and moulded ideas about caste, caste status and social distance; and could play on the attributes, roles and relational position of specific castes.[94] These figures and symbols were a part of exorcist ceremonies; and exorcisms were a regular phenomenon in the life of Sinhalese villagers, whether Buddhists or Christians. In sum, then, there were numerous activities and symbols which

[93] Washbrook, 1975, pp. 167–8.

[94] Personal communication from Professor Bruce Kapferer, supported by the seminar papers he has presented at the University of Adelaide. These are now incorporated in his *A Celebration of Demons*, forthcoming publication, University of Indiana Press.

emphasised caste identity among the Sinhalese as one of the 'normative phenomena . . . which frame[d] social action in social space'.[95]

Against this background it is not surprising that the KSD caste elites initially challenged the supremacy of the Goyigama at a normatively meaningful and strategic point: namely, the principles of recruitment to the order of monks, the Sangha. Nor is it mere chance that this challenge, dating from the latter half of the eighteenth century, should find the Salāgama rather than the Karāva at the forefront. Because of the importance of cinnamon peeling for the colonial powers, the administrative organisation of this caste had been taken much further; their work brought them into abrasive interaction with landholders from all castes; and from the mid-eighteenth century they found that the Dutch were ready to protect and favour them. Such factors explain the late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century assertiveness of the Salāgama.[96]

Assertive Salāgama group consciousness in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries could only have stirred that of the Karāva and other contiguous caste groups. It is a sociological commonplace that the clarification of boundaries by one social group encourages a similar affirmation of boundaries among those social formations with whom this group is in regular interaction. Along the southwestern coast the Salāgama and Karāva hamlets and population concentrations nestle alongside each other; and there is a long history of local conflict – even to the extent of legendary massacres in some localities.[97] The occasional instances of conflict between the Karāva and the Salāgama that have been noticed in the course of this study mark what was always a deep current of rivalry. In numbers the Karāva and Salāgama were the second and third largest caste groups in the Maritime Provinces (see tables 2 and 3) and were in competition for superiority of caste rank at both local and wider levels. Rubbing shoulders and knocking elbows in so many ways, it follows that the caste consciousness of the Salāgama influenced the growth of Karāva casteism; and that a

95 Tiryakian, 1970, p. 115.

96 See above, pp. 90–1.

97 Alexander, 1973, p. 48; and Ryan, 1953, pp. 279–81. One of the regions of the sharpest Salāgama–Karāva rivalry has been the locality of Ambalangoda-Balapitiya.

symbiotic process of encouragement for their respective group sentiments had operated for centuries.

In the light of this discussion one can contend that the Karāva could not escape their Karāva-ness. Though not confined to them, it is likely that this comment applied most to the ambitious Karāva and the emerging Karāva elite families. This statement is an indication of the economic polarisation which developed within the Karāva population as a result of the emergence of an elite of capitalists and Western-educated individuals. The majority of Karāva remained poor, whether as workers, domestic servants, fishermen or carpenters, etc. And those who improved themselves and moved into what was locally referred to as 'the lower middle class' or 'middle class' were careful to stress status distinctions. Familial interests had considerable priority in the strategies of the Karāva elite. Through a series of cross-cousin marriages or the marriage of pairs of siblings the Karāva rich were careful to concentrate and husband their resources. In adopting the Westernised and ostentatious life-style favoured by the Sinhalese elite in British times, they also marked themselves off from their co-castemen. Even religious practice reflected and furthered this form of social distancing between the wealthy and the poor. Bruce Kapferer has shown how the 'middle class' Karāva within the town of Galle have emphasised more fundamentalist forms of religious practice. They rarely indulge in large-scale healing rituals which involve the immediate neighbourhood as do 'the working class'. Pious Buddhists among them have household shrines (*buḍu gē*) which normally contain a Buddha image surrounded by pictures of a deity, whereas Buddhist members of 'the working class' prefer to separate the deity shrines and the Buddha shrine, and to place the latter away from the polluted context of their dwelling place.[98]

Such trends associated with the process of economic polarisation raise the question whether internal contradictions became crystallised within the Karāva caste, and weakened the solidarity and the primordial identity which the Karāva had inherited from the past, and which gained continued support from both cultural typifications and the patterns of interaction

[98] Kapferer, 1976. Following the local view, Kapferer includes the clerical workers within the category 'middle class'. Cf. Roberts, 1974d and 1975b.

with other castes. As one might expect, there is little information regarding the sentiments of the masses during the period that concerns us. Our answer must depend for the most part on circumstantial evidence.

It can be shown that the Karāva elite maintained important bridges across the lines of economic stratification. The Karāva rich and the Western-educated Karāva, whether the older aristocracy represented by such families as the de Fonsekas of Kalutara, or the new rich, functioned as local notables at the apex of patron–client networks. We have seen in chapter five that the recruitment policies of Karāva magnates tended to favour other Karāva and provided a stepladder for the social mobility of several other families. In a society that was permeated by familial and caste nepotism, the presence of Karāva magnates and an educated professional elite must have been of considerable benefit to relatives and other Karāva by providing access to information, jobs, contracts and that important passport, the letter of recommendation from a respected British resident. It is not possible to provide statistics on this point. One might conjecture that the actual number who profited from such tendencies was limited. It is likely that a greater number of Karāva profited from the schools which were founded by Karāva magnates in localities with Karāva concentrations. Visakha College in Colombo, Prince and Princess of Wales Colleges in Moratuwa, Dharmasoka College in Ambalangoda and Mahinda College in Galle were among the private secondary schools established by Karāva notables during the second half of the nineteenth century. Through munificent donations and other means, the Karāva elite (even Buddhists) also maintained connections with Catholic and Protestant missionary schools. At this early and crucial period in the development of secondary education in Sri Lanka,[99] these ventures and connections must have been of wider benefit to the other members of the Karāva community.

From the contemporary reports of anthropologists as well as stray pieces of historical information, it is evident that the Karāva entrepreneurs in the interior of the island and at ports overseas took pains to maintain their natal connections. Many

[99] See Peebles, 1973, pp. 287ff. esp. p. 290; and tables 2 and 3 in Roberts (ed.), 1977, pp. xliii–iv.

of them spent a portion of their riches in their home areas in building mansions, temples and churches as well as schools, and in maintaining a lavish life-style.[100] While such munificence was intended as conspicuous display in support of their elitist pretensions, it carried a by-product in the form of local employment. The transformation of the cluster of villages known as Moratuwa as a result of such activity during the middle decades of the nineteenth century is graphically conveyed in the description from Reverend Spence Hardy (in 1864) which I have occasion to quote later on in this book.[101]

The connections which the Karāva merchants in distant colonial ports and interior market-towns maintained with their natal villages were not solely sentimental in origin. There were instrumental goals. Their home areas served as a source of many commodities which they traded in, or functioned as cogs in the import-and-export chain that connected the island with international trading centres. As Bruce Kapferer observes of the Karāva from Galle who journeyed overseas but nevertheless left their wives at home and re-invested their profits in land and business within the town: 'Their success in a competitive trading market was vitally linked to the continued supply of cheap gems and curios from home, a supply of trustworthy relatives to assist with the running of their shops and access to craftsmen, usually drawn from the artisan or *navandanna* caste, to make jewellery and other objects of attraction.'[102] They sought to protect the economic niches which they had secured for themselves by establishing caste-oriented patron–client networks and by carving out for themselves a role as community leaders. Thus, in Galle in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, 'a major consequence of the development of overseas trade was the emergence of a class which did not separate itself from less fortunate members of the community but rather sought actively to control and dominate [the community]'.

'Religion was an important element in their domination.' The Buddhist elite associated with the revivalist movement provided ideological legitimation for the Karāva Buddhist merchants of Galle (and elsewhere). It supplied 'a convenient

[100] *Census of Ceylon 1911*, Colombo: The Government Printer, 1912, vol. 1, p. 198; C. Don Bastian, *The de Soysa Charitaya*, 1904; *T. Cent. Imp.*, 1907, *passim*; Kapferer, 1976; and Alexander, 1973, pp. 65, 71. [101] See below, p. 273. [102] 1976, pp. 26–7.

ideological framework within which traders who were separated for long periods of time from their home base could maintain their leadership of the community and communicate an identity with those at home' – a Sinhala Buddhist as well as Karāva identity.[103] As with the Karāva in general, these merchants were only too conscious of the manner in which their caste was commonly associated with the 'demeaning' and 'sinful' occupation of fishing; while the arrack renters must have been only too aware of the contradiction between their trade and Buddhist norms. Buddhist piety could counterbalance and compensate for these disadvantages.[104] In this form, the Karāva Buddhist activists were not thinking only of their individual interests, but of the Karāva caste's image as a whole.

So, too, did philanthropic largesse function as a form of legitimation. Patrimonial philanthropy was a firmly rooted tradition among the Sinhalese in Sri Lanka and has been upheld as a monarchical virtue in Asia ever since Asoka's day.[105] Fulfilling similar roles, it was natural for Buddhist religiosity and philanthropy to join hands in the virtuous and conspicuous acts of Buddhist philanthropy which so many Karāva and other Buddhist capitalists indulged in. Among the Catholic and Protestant Karāva entrepreneurs, too, the building of churches and various other benefactions were not uncommon. In general, Karāva elite philanthropy extended beyond the religious sphere to contributions towards the extension of medical services and other community benefits. The de Soysa family assisted the development of the General Hospital at Colombo in outstanding ways. Information from Moratuwa and Panadura reveals that a Friend-in-Need Society, a Poor Marriageable Girls' Dowry Fund and several family benefit associations were initiated in the locality during the mid-nineteenth century, while a Moratuwa Carpenters' Society was started by C. H. de Soysa in 1878.[106] The extended family networks of Sinhalese society guaranteed that the benefits of elite wealth percolated down to their poorer relatives. Jeronis de Soysa came from a large family and family traditions affirm

[103] *Ibid.* [104] Also see Evers, 1964, pp. 134–7.

[105] Sarkisyanz, 1965; Bechert, 1963; and Tambiah, 1976, chaps. 4 and 5.

[106] The Moratuwa-Friend-in-Need Society, *Centenary Souvenir*, 1951; Holy Emmanuel Church, 1910 and 1935; and *T. Cent. Imp.*, 1907, pp. 538–9, 674–6.

that Jeronis, Susew and their wives selected husbands with care for their numerous nephews and nieces, while providing dowries for the latter.[107] C. H. de Soysa himself was a simple man and his name was a by-word for largesse to individuals as well as to institutions.

These philanthropic activities were infused by paternalistic and patronial notions. It would probably be correct to state that the Karāva elite were relatively complacent about the economic condition of the majority of their caste-fellows. They certainly did not embark on a radical programme directed towards the economic uplift of the Karāva poor and the Karāva community as a whole. As I have stressed at the end of chapter five, the pooling process of caste networks was redistributive rather than distributive. The permeation of wealth downwards from the Karāva rich to the Karāva poor must have been, at best, modest in proportion. There is no reason to expect anything else. The Karāva elite did not need to manufacture grandiose projects of economic uplift in order to sustain their leadership or to mould a sense of community. Their patron–client networks, their philanthropy and their other acts of ideological legitimation were sufficient guarantee of their leadership in conditions of social interaction which supported their Karāva-ness.

Nor should we attempt to assess the sentiments of the Karāva poor and their alienation from the rich purely in terms of the economic returns which they derived from the activities of the rich. That would lead us towards misplaced concreteness and a reflectionist conception of ideology. Other considerations must be added to the relatively modest economic benefits for the poor which have been spelled out in the previous paragraphs. For one, however limited were the opportunities for social mobility afforded to the Karāva masses as a direct result of Karāva elite activity, it is important that their activities and patron–client networks held out the *prospect* of social mobility. In this sense, the outstanding success of such men as Jeronis de Soysa (or Babasingho Vedarāla in his early days) and M. A. Fernando (Kathonis Appu Baas) was to the Karāva villager what Horatio Alger was to poor white Americans (the embodi-

[107] Sir Wilfred de Soysa's reminiscences as communicated to Mr Sunimal Fernando in 1963.

ment of a rags-to-riches career). For another, while it is undeniable that the battle for social and political rights and the great symbolic triumphs were informed by the specific interests of the Karāva elite, and redounded to their benefit, it cannot be said that the Karāva masses were involved in these events merely as a passive audience. One must not underestimate the satisfactions derived from their vicarious participation in the triumphs of their 'leading lights'. Besides, in catering to caste pride and in building up the self-esteem of the ordinary Karāva, the Karāva elite and the Karāva propagandists provided the poorer members of the community with vital 'instruments' in their transactions with the poor of other castes. It is my speculation that in the nineteenth century these developments encouraged the Karāva poor to challenge the pretensions of Goyigama neighbours and to avoid the petty discriminations to which they were sometimes subject in their dealings with Goyigama headmen and the Goyigama in general. Conversely, one suspects that the Karāva poor may have paraded their pride and exercised similar discriminations in their dealings with those members from such castes as the Oli, Beravā, Wahumpura etc., who were of similar economic status. Altercations at the village level which were reported by several British officials at different points of time in the nineteenth century were probably the result of these sorts of encounter. We have seen that the disputes were sufficiently numerous for the information to receive attention from the highest officials.[108] One can even perceive in their remarks an undercurrent of distaste for the thrusting quality of the Karāva and Salāgama castes.

A third consideration: the significant role of the local temple or church in sustaining the bonds between the Karāva elite and the Karāva masses must be emphasised. This is an extension of the argument that religion provided a means of ideological legitimation. The point is, in neighbourhoods with Karāva concentrations, these religious centres were precisely that: centres – centres of group activity and collective consciousness, albeit centres which emphasised the distinctions between poor and rich. For the Buddhist Karāva poor, the growth of Karāva-dominated temples and Karāva monastic fraternities in the

[108] See above, pp. 91, 142, 149, 157.

nineteenth century must have been particularly meaningful and helpful because they obviated the irritations that *could* attend their dealings with Goyigama-dominated temples. And virtually every Karāva Buddhist must have been aware of the instrumental role of famous Karāva leaders in bringing these about. At the very least, they knew which Karāva magnate had built or promoted the building of their local temple. More often than not, the family of the founding father continued to have an influential place in the *dāyaka sabha*. The *dāyaka sabha* fulfilled a nodal role in the networks that linked Karāva notables with ordinary Karāva because it controlled valued resources and services, among them access to the temple cemetery.

The depth of caste loyalty among the Sinhalese is vividly illustrated in the splits within the Buddhist monastic order and the persistence of these divisions over a long period of time. It has been shown that in the 1840s the boarding hostel at a Christian missionary school was rent by caste divisions, and that the casteism of the Karāva boys sharply imprinted itself on the minds of an equally partisan Kandyan Goyigama.[109] Our account of caste competition in the previous chapters was interspersed with examples which should have made it clear that caste rivalry was not confined to tiny elites or to self-appointed caste spokesmen. Again, during the heated arguments concerning caste primacy in the late nineteenth century, Karāva Buddhists and Christians as well as Karāva merchants, lawyers, plantation owners, clerks, monks and other members of the vernacular-educated intelligentsia participated actively in speaking up for the Karāva cause, both in Sinhala and in English.[110]

The increase in spatial mobility in British times did not dilute Karāva caste solidarity. On the contrary, the network of communications established under the British aegis and the process of administrative unification served to strengthen caste ties, and facilitated the mobilisation of caste support. Unlike their Nadar counterparts in Ramnad, the Karāva traders and the Karāva literati who had moved to the Kandyan districts retained connections with their natal villages. We noticed earlier that at one stage 'the Nadar trading community of

[109] See above, p. 151. [110] See above, pp. 159–65.

Ramnad tried to disassociate themselves from their tree-climbing (i.e. toddy tapping) brethren in Tinnevelly'.[111] This was not uncommon in British India. Segments of a caste in the process of social mobility found it advantageous to amputate themselves from their natal mass, because it tended to be a millstone round their necks. The emergence of the Sat-Gopas and the Tilis from the Gopa and Teli castes in Bengal are cases in point.[112] It is of the greatest significance that the Karāva elite did not choose this strategy, though the presence of several poverty-stricken Karāva fishing villages could only have been a conspicuous contradiction to some of the claims they were articulating. A further illustration of this tendency is witnessed in Bryce Ryan's finding that in the seaside town of Karavälla (pseudonym) in the 1950s the well-to-do Karāva, who lived in a distinct residential area, made no attempt to hide their kinship connections with the fisherfolk residing near the strand.[113]

In summary, then, at the level of the locality or sub-region the Karāva identity and the links between the Karāva elite and the Karāva poor were maintained not only by the primordial cultural typifications and the dialectics of localised caste competition, but also by a network of patron–client transactions which supported the diffusion of limited economic benefits to the poor, by religious and philanthropic modes of legitimation and by the organisational and symbolic focus which caste-controlled temples and churches provided from the early nineteenth century. The lively local caste conflicts were not only carried into broader regional and national levels of caste competition, but made the latter meaningful. The absence of endogamous sub-castes among the Karāva, the kin-focused, centripetal marriage principles favouring caste exclusiveness, the bilateral inheritance system and the central role of dowagers among the Sinhalese in general, and the improvement of communications from the early nineteenth century, all supported linkages and networks that extended across localities and linked the notables of one locality to other localities. Thus, Karāva caste consciousness was promoted and maintained by a number of interrelated factors: elite:mass linkages made up of both normative and material phenomena; economic, political

[111] Hardgrave, 1969, pp. 264 and 106; and above, pp. 184–5.

[112] Sanyal, 1971. [113] 1953, p. 107.

and kinship networks which cut across localities; primordial, yet evolving, cultural typifications; the institutionalisation of caste by the Sinhalese and colonial states, and the influence of the caste-based organising concepts of the colonial powers; the age-old, albeit changing, patterns of caste discrimination; and a long history of caste competition at the level of the locality or sub-region which was eventually extended into an island-wide phenomenon as Sri Lanka was unified and increasingly centralised by British power.

On these foundations one can conclude that sentiments of caste loyalty and caste exclusiveness were widely diffused among the Karāva people. A mid-twentieth expression of this sense of community is seen in Bryce Ryan's exaggerated claim: 'the Karāva, whether villager or urbanite, never covers up his caste; to the contrary, he is usually proud of it.'[114] Qualifications must be attached to this conclusion. It would be too much to expect such sentiments to be anything but unevenly distributed within the Karāva population, so that some localities may not have been fully tuned-in to the group frequency. Nor should this emphasis on Karāva group solidarity be allowed to disguise internal differentiation: those of class, religion, region and family. During the British period, new status distinctions evolved and certain Karāva lineages considered themselves to be superior to those of the rank and file. In his reminiscences J. Vincent Mendis records the prevalence of social jealousies between the Karāva south of the Bentota river and those to the north.[115] The competition for prestige between the Warusahännädigē de Soysas and the Vidānalagē de Mels was a striking part of the social scene in Moratuwa and Colombo from the middle decades of the nineteenth century. Danister Perera Abeyewardena and Thomas de Silva Amarasuriya contested against each other with spirit for number 4 ward in the Galle Municipal Council in 1905; and both had the support of local Goyigama notables.[116] The Buddhist–Christian confrontation in the island was so sharp that it must have introduced strains within the Karāva community. Indeed, one thread of Panadura folklore contends that the immediate provocation for the

[114] *Ibid.* [115] 1968, p. 11.
[116] Galle Municipal Council Record Office, file no. 383; and personal communication from Professor Bruce Kapferer.

famous Buddhist–Christian debate at Panadura in 1873 was P. Arnold Dias' (1849–1900) decision to accept Christianity following his betrothal to Apalonia (de) Soysa – a decision which enraged his elder brother, P. Jeremias Dias (1848–1902), an arrack renter, merchant and ardent Buddhist worker.[117]

Under pressure, however, the Karāva tended to close ranks. As argued in chapter six the social conflicts in the British period heightened the collective consciousness of the Karāva still further. The 'Kara–Govi' conflict involved battles for social prestige, controversies over whose caste was superior, competition for prestigious appointments and awards, struggles for strategic political roles and an intense involvement in the task of upstaging each other which led elite families to extravagance in their life-style.

In the context of similar competition among castes in India, it has been seen that Srinivas describes two alternative, yet interacting, life-styles: those of Sanskritisation and Westernisation, which are presented as channels of social mobility as well as modes of legitimating upward mobility.[118] He argues that Westernisation provided the higher castes with (i) a means of 'emphasizing their distinction from the lower' as well as (ii) a means of increasing 'the cultural, social and economic distance between them and the lower castes'; and contends that Westernisation was a much more difficult road for the lower castes than Sanskritisation.[119]

Despite the absence in Sri Lanka of a Brahmin community perpetuating a ritualised life-style for laymen, one can pinpoint certain practices which bear comparison with the process of Sanskritisation. Two were only too obvious in the descriptions embodied in previous sections of this book: the adoption of Kshātriya symbols at certain ceremonies by the Karāva; and the emphasis on the classificatory framework provided by the *varṇa* model during the controversies over caste primacy. Perhaps less obvious as a Sanskritic action was the jettisoning of traditional forms of deference, and the outward marks of low status, by certain castes in the course of the nineteenth century.

[117] My interview with Charles M. Dias, youngest son (b. 1898) of Ponnahännädigē Jeremias Dias. *Re* the Diases, see *T. Cent. Imp.*, 1907, pp. 678–82.

[118] 1962, pp. 49ff; and 1967, chap. 2 and pp. 90–2.

[119] 1967, p. 91; cf. Peebles, 1973, pp. 7–8.

Such steps were also accompanied by the adoption of more prestigious symbols: white-washed walls and tiles for houses, or the use of palanquins during marriage ceremonies. In a context in which a Westernised life-style gained increasing prestige, such a Sanskritic strategy was quickly enveloped by Westernisation. A Western form of dress accompanied by migration to an urban centre could conveniently circumvent traditional vestimentary distinctions without provoking the sanctions of higher castes in the locality. That is, it may have been *relatively* easier for, say, a Beravā to wear trousers and a shirt than for him to wear a banian with his sarong.[120]

In Sri Lanka, the lengthy period of Western rule in the Low-Country resulted in a much more pronounced penetration of Western consumption patterns than within most parts of British India. From the onset of British rule, the reference group became the British ruling elite. A primacy was attached to a Western life-style. One saw the evolution, through a variety of stages, of a Westernised Sinhalese gentleman. The brown sahib, as I shall term this model, served as a reference group of imitation and a vehicle for the expression of public claims to higher status – thereby underlining the distinction from low status individuals, and affirming achievements or legacies.

In the Sinhalese districts, however, there were other strategies at hand for the pursuit of these goals. For one, the life-style associated with the Goyigama landlord and patron of aristocratic stock provided an indigenous model, the *walauwa hāmi*, or manorial lord, as I shall describe this emulative standard. The *walauwa hāmi*'s role was equivalent to that of the leading members of a caste enjoying decisive dominance in an Indian rural locality. In Sri Lanka this model did not stand in opposition to Westernisation. The 'first class Goyigama' had

[120] *Re* this conjecture, note the resigned observation of a Goyigama headman in 1829: 'When a man assumes the dress of a Burgher and lives in Colombo it becomes a difficult question to decide his caste' (evidence in CO 416/4, no. 16). However, the proletarian and subordinate status of the majority of individuals from such castes as the Hinnā, Beravā, Oli, Pali, Demala Gattara, etc., probably made it impossible for them to adopt Westernised dress. Till well into the twentieth century, in many rural areas these castes tended to adhere to some of the traditional customs and risked higher caste sanctions whenever they dared to breach these frontiers (Ryan, 1953, *passim*; and folklore personally communicated to me).

begun to adopt Western ways in Dutch times and continued to lead the way in the British period, while the Kandyan aristocracy was not immune from this process.[121] The *walauwa hāmi* as a reference model, therefore, furthered Westernisation, while yet injecting certain traditional ingredients into the behavioural practices of aspiring Sinhalese families.[122]

Indeed, Westernisation was so prevalent among the Sinhalese that it generated its own antithesis – in the form of a reaction which attacked the brown sahibs for aping Western ways and argued against the process of denationalisation. This critique was a product of the cultural awakening and the growing nationalistic sentiments dating from the last quarter of the nineteenth century.[123] It was particularly favoured by Buddhist activists. In providing an alternative model, these critics not only stressed the virtue of indigenous ways, but also brought out a refurbished Buddhist tradition. The philanthropic and pious Buddhist community leader exemplified in the career of Odiris de Silva, and the *anagārika* role of this-worldly Buddhist activism pursued by the Anagarika Dharmapala, were variant and up-dated versions of this tradition. Since Buddhism held a place in Sri Lanka equivalent to that of Hinduism in India, adherence to such models by Buddhist *arrivistes* and upwardly mobile individuals can be regarded as a process of ideological legitimation that was similar to the role fulfilled by Sanskritisation in India.[124]

From the late nineteenth century, therefore, one can identify three emulative models influencing the life-style of the Sinhalese elites: (1) the brown sahib; (2) the *walauwa hāmi*; and (3) the pious Buddhist activist. The first and second models were largely complementary. The third was in opposition to the first, but with some accommodation it was not impossible for a brown sahib to be a Buddhist leader. The life-style of a *walauwa*

[121] Kotelawele, 1967, p. 15; Yasmine Gooneratne, 1968, chaps. 3 and 4 esp. pp. 36–9; Roberts, 1975a, pp. 29–36; and Sir Solomon Dias Bandaranaike, *Remembered Yesterdays*, London: 1929.

[122] See Roberts, 1975b, pp. 45–51; Yalman, 1967, pp. 105, 107, 140–9, 184; and Obeyesekere, 1967, chap. 9.

[123] Roberts (ed.), 1977, pp. lxxi–lxxviii, lxxxix–xciv.

[124] Srinivas' analysis of Sanskritisation does not clarify adequately the distinction between something that is a causal factor in upward social mobility and something that is a rhetorical medium for claims to higher status.

hāmi tended to infiltrate the other two models. It was a seductive model. It was part of the Buddhist tradition for weight to be attached to a prestigious person's (or god's) retinue. Even wealthy KSD merchant princes, Western-educated doctors and lawyers and pious Buddhists were inclined to indulge in rural landlordism and to establish new model plantation *walauwas* (manor houses) as their country residences. In this sense, in their very success in challenging Goyigama supremacy, the KSD elites tended to pursue social prestige in a style that had been formulated by the Goyigama aristocracy and to turn themselves into something like their arch-opponents.[125] In this qualified sense it may not be going too far to speak of the Goyigama-isation of the Karāva, Salāgama and Durāva elites.

[125] Cf. Taylor, 1964, pp. 472–3, 485.

8

Causal factors in the moulding of Karāva entrepreneurship and the emergence of a Karāva elite

In seeking the factors that contributed towards the economic advances and the socio-political thrusts of the Karāva elite, any analysis must traverse three or four centuries. This demands attention to diachronic variations. Sequential developments might be perceived, turning-points located. The time-scale complicates the evaluation of causal factors. The isolation of a specific factor may raise questions about the conditions which spawned the factor. One gets pushed back in time till the historical records peter out. It is only with a limited regard for these time variations that this chapter proceeds. For the most part, the analysis will rely on controlled comparisons: that is, a method which compares the attributes, the relational features and the performance of two or more entities in order to isolate causal influences. The better-known examples of this strategy involve comparisons across pairs or multiples of contrasting polities so as to illuminate the varying processes of state formation or political modernisation or economic development.[1] In contrast with these global-scale comparisons, in this study the strategy is applied within a single geographical unit and focuses on social groups as well as regional differences. The Karāva will not be viewed in isolation. The comparative performance of other segments of the Sinhalese community will be pinpointed in order to isolate differentiating factors. The categorisation of segments will be on a regional and socio-structural

[1] See Stein Rokkan, 'Models and methods in the comparative study of nation-building', *Acta Sociologica*, vol. 12:2, 1969, pp. 53–73. Among the studies that can be cited are those by Barrington Moore, Karl W. Deutsch, R. Holt and Turner, C. P. Kindleberger, R. E. Ward and D. Rostow, and H. J. Habakkuk. One of the earliest was J. H. Clapham's *The Economic Development of France and Germany*, Cambridge University Press, 1921.

basis: the Sinhalese, the Low-Country Sinhalese, the Karāva–Salāgama–Durāva taken together, the Karāva and the Moratuwa Karāva. In sequence, each of these categories will be compared with the category that follows. Since the latter four categories are part of the Sinhalese community and each category contains within it the category that follows, this mode of analysis represents a special variation in the comparative method: a series of controlled comparisons which can be likened to the peeling of an onion. In following this mode of analysis the broad arguments within the previous chapters will be reiterated, while new materials will also be introduced.

Sinhalese : Low-Country Sinhalese – factors favouring the Low-Country Sinhalese

A conspicuous feature of the Sinhalese elite in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was the predominance, the overwhelming preponderance, of Low-Country Sinhalese. The rest of the Sinhalese, that is, the Kandyans, had been left behind in the competition for status and power (though their control of *nindagam* and monastic land, and their high traditional status, enabled the Kandyan *radala* families to retain localised power and provided foundations for subsequent mid-twentieth-century advances). There were absolutely no Kandyan merchant princes, graphite mine owners or arrack renters of note. There were some Kandyan plantation owners but only one or two held over 480 acres of land, so that the principal Sinhalese plantation owners listed in my compilations for 1917 and 1927 were virtually all Low-Country Sinhalese. In 1901 there were only 15 Kandyans among five selected occupational categories (doctors, lawyers, surveyors, engineers and auctioneers), or 1.6 per cent of the total Ceylonese complement and a mere 4.1 per cent of the Sinhalese in these fields, because the equivalent count for the Low-Country Sinhalese was 349.[2] The marked difference in the achievements of the Low-Country and the Kandyan Sinhalese in the period from 1815 to 1931 enables one to isolate certain of the differentiating factors.

[2] See table 4 in Roberts in *UCHC*, 1973c, p. 284.

One point of difference has been the distribution of the coconut tree. Though it grows on the lower plateaux and foothills of the Central Highlands its principal habitat has always been in the southwestern lowlands within the Maritime Provinces. The source of a wide range of products, as we have seen (chapter four), the coconut tree assisted capital accumulation in pre-British times and probably became more important than the arecanut tree within the rural economy of the villages located in the lowlands. In the British period the indigenous-owned plantation industry was centred upon the coconut tree.

Another point of difference was the stage at which armed resistance to the Western powers occurred. In the Low-Country such opposition took place during the sixteenth century under the inspiration of the Sitawaka kings, and then continued on into the seventeenth century through rebellions against Portuguese power. The Kandyan leaders took up the battle where Sitawaka had left off. Their very success in retaining independence meant that they received the greatest blows in the early nineteenth century. These occurred after the Great Rebellion of 1817–18. The Kandyan aristocracy suffered some losses as a result, through death in the liberation struggle, executions, deportations and confiscation of land. Though a few families were reinstated subsequently, for over forty years the British administration viewed the Kandyan *radala* families with considerable suspicion (a volte-face in British policy took place around the 1870s). At a point of time crucial to social advance, therefore, the pre-British Kandyan elite was in a weakened condition. In contrast, in the Low-Country the leading headmen (Goyigama and non-Goyigama) in the early nineteenth century were drawn from families which had adapted themselves to the demands of the Western overlords. Many had adopted Christianity, and family histories in a few cases would reveal a progression from Catholicism under the Portuguese to Presbyterianism under the Dutch to the Anglican faith in British times.

The accommodations in the religious sphere provide a clue to a wider process of adaptation which occurred within the Low-Country as a result of the prolonged period of Western rule prior to the British conquest. The marked difference it produced between the Kandyan and Low-Country Sinhalese

has been regularly, and rightly, emphasised in the literature on the island's history. During this period the Low-Country Sinhalese had regular contact with Europeans and Western institutions. In continuation of previous patterns of relationship, parts of the Low-Country appear to have been closely integrated with the Indo-Lanka and inter-Asian trading networks. Market relations and cash flows became much more common. Seeds of urbanisation were implanted in the coastal regions at Galle, Colombo and other little ports. Such tiny 'urban' centres served as the gateways of Western cultural values and the entering wedge of commercial capitalism. It was at such places, in Dutch times, that tiny settlements of Burghers, the framework of Roman–Dutch law and other foreign 'agents of change' took root.

The Low-Country Sinhalese districts, then, were subject to the processes of commercialisation, monetisation, Westernisation and Christianisation for almost three hundred years before the year 1815. After a century of violent resistance, adaptation became one of the keynotes of the Low-Country Sinhalese response to the weight of foreign military power (though the occasional fire of resistance also broke out). In time this involved a modification in their customary outlook. Indeed, one suspects that adaptation, flexibility and chicanery were required survival techniques on occasions in the face of the religious bigotry and arbitrary despotism that characterised the actions of so many of the Portuguese officials and clerics; and, to a lesser extent, of the Dutch. In this way the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries served as a crucible which moulded qualities among the Low-Country Sinhalese which served them well in the period of British rule.[3] These centuries provided a fund of experience in dealing with foreigners and foreign ways and in coping with commercialisation. In this sense the Low-Country Sinhalese entered the nineteenth century with experiential and ideological capital which gave them good returns during the expansion of capitalist institutions and capitalist values in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

[3] Cf. the fact that 'the economic relations between the Ibo and Europeans . . . were intensive, continuous and of long duration' is said to have been of some consequence in their receptivity to change (Ottenberg, 1959, p. 135). Also see Swift, 1971, p. 267.

The Kandyan Sinhalese generations of the first half of the nineteenth century lacked this experience. Indeed, the influence of three centuries of Western rule in the Low-Country was so marked that early-nineteenth-century observers were immediately struck by the difference between the Kandyans and the Low-Countrymen.[4] The examples incorporated within this book would also have revealed that British administrators found conditions in the Maritime Provinces and the Kandyan Provinces to be radically different during the course of the nineteenth century and tailored their policies accordingly.[5] Indeed, in time the British found the Kandyans and Kandyan territories much easier to deal with. The noble and simple Kandyan became the Sri Lankan version of the 'Noble Savage' and the 'Traditional Man', that admirable species which, so usefully and happily, served as a support for British rule, whether as Lugardian 'indirect rulers' or somewhat more profane collaborators.[6] The very backwardness of the Kandyan community in the early twentieth century provided the British with political support which was delivered to them, ironically, by the handful of Kandyans who had adapted themselves and made the grade into the ranks of the Western-educated elite. Retaining their sense of Kandyan identity this tiny *radala* segment came to see themselves as leaders of a community with a lost patrimony. Their sense of relative deprivation and relative weakness was acute. They reacted against the domination of the Low-Country Sinhalese in the Ceylon National Congress and the new legislative institutions, and had fears for the future. In the 1910s and 1920s they attempted to salvage their position by adopting a programme of Kandyan nationalism and demanding a federal state.[7]

Once the opportunity structure grew in British times, a significant number of Low-Countrymen capitalised on their experiential heritage. In contrast the response of the generality

[4] E.g. Davy, 1821, pp. 108–9.

[5] See above, pp. 149, 157; and John Douglas, 'Minute as to Village Tribunals', 28 June 1880, in *Sessional Paper XX of 1880* in CO 54/528, fol. 34.

[6] E.g. Frederick Bowes, Bowes and Arrows [*c.* 1924–5], unpublished MS (autobiography), Rhodes House Library, Oxford, pp. 98, 200–1, 321 and *passim*.

[7] See K. M. de Silva in *UCHC*, 1973, pp. 402–3; Roberts (ed.), 1979, pp. 44–53; and L. A. Wickremeratne, 'Kandyans and Nationalism in Sri Lanka: Some Reflections', *CJHSS*, vol. v:1 and 2, Jan.–Dec. 1975, pp. 49–68.

of Kandyans was obscurantist and insular. Several of these new opportunities arose within the Kandyan areas, in association with the burgeoning coffee and coconut plantation economy. While the Kandyans responded by growing more peasant coffee for the market,[8] Low-Country Sinhalese (and Moors and Indian immigrants) swarmed over the Kandyan districts as labourers, carters, artisans, traders, businessmen, teachers, clerks and planters of cash crops.[9] The spatial mobility of the Low-Country Sinhalese in the wake of British capitalism compares with that of the Bengalis in northern India in the wake of British power, with the important difference that it was somewhat more weighted towards private enterprise and economic activity rather than towards the role of administrative underlings.

Perhaps the most indicative testimony to the differences in the economic behaviour of the Kandyans and the Low-Country Sinhalese is afforded by a comparison of their respective traditional (or pre-British) elites, the *radala* and the 'first class Goyigama'. Though the majority of 'first class Goyigama' revealed an aversion to trading activity in British times, they quickly took to the commodity production of cash crops, especially coconut; and many of them extended their investments in this field. Though as well endowed with ancestral properties, the Kandyan *radala* families were much slower to take to commodity production on a large scale. Several tended to lease or sell portions of their property to European or other planters. A few even dissipated their heritages.[10] This is one reason why the setbacks encountered by some Kandyan *radala* after the rebellion of 1817–18 cannot be viewed either as a sufficient or as a major cause for their relative failure in the maximisation of capital and influence during the first century of British rule.[11]

[8] Ameer Ali, 1972b; Colvin R. de Silva, 1962, pp. 482–3.

[9] See Roberts, 1965, pp. 312–13, 326–36; *AR 1867*, pp. 11, 33–4; A. O. Brodie, 'Topographical and statistical account of the district of Noowerakalawiya', *JRAS, CB*, 1856–8, p. 166; and Roberts, 'Indian estate labour in Ceylon during the coffee period (1830–1880) part I', *Indian Econ. and Social History Review*, vol. 3:1, Mar. 1966, pp. 1–3.

[10] A. C. Lawrie, *A Gazetteer of the Central Province*, 2 vols., Colombo: Govt Printer, 1896 and 1898.

[11] Compare, too, the state of *pirivena* education in the Kandyan and Low-Country districts during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Despite superior material

In the course of the nineteenth century the advantages held by the Low-Country Sinhalese relative to the Kandyans tended to multiply in cumulative fashion. Colombo remained the administrative capital and principal port for commodities as it had been since the early seventeenth century, and soon outstripped all other towns in its importance. The Low-Country as a whole came to be served by a much larger number of English-media schools than the Kandyan districts (see table 16). This was in part because there was a smaller population in the latter, but largely because of the more pronounced demand for English education in the Low-Country (or parts thereof). What is more, the Low-Countrymen had the economic means to support this demand. Their wealthy members sponsored private schools or donated money to the missionary schools. At lower social levels in rural areas some families were able to forego the labour of their sons and daughters in return for the prospects of future gain through a prolonged period of education in the vernacular or the English media. In brief, a comparison of the strategic assets held by the Low-Country Sinhalese and by the Kandyans reveals a widening of the gap between the two in the former's favour. The gap might have been yet wider had not the Ceylon Tamils in the north taken to English education in a big way and entered the genteel professions and government service in significant numbers.

Low-Country Sinhalese : KSD–factors favouring the KSD

As segments of the Low-Country Sinhalese population, the KSD castes naturally partook of the advantages described above. But their capital accumulation and social advances were so conspicuous that they even came to the notice of casual observers in the twentieth century. The data assembled in chapter five would have confirmed these widely held impressions. Taken as a whole, this corpus of statistical data reveals that, in relation to their demographic proportions, the KSD castes fared better than the Navandanna, Wahumpura, Rajaka, Beravā and other non-Goyigama castes; and, in more

endowments, Buddhist education in the Kandyan areas was much less vigorous than that in the Low-Country (Malalgoda, 1976, pp. 232–41).

qualified terms, better than the Low-Country Goyigama as well.

These contrasting achievements raise the question whether the KSD possessed common distinguishing features which might have promoted the social mobility of some families. One factor immediately comes to mind. They appear to have been largely immigrant groups and were, in early modern times, relatively new arrivals. One recalls the contention that spatial mobility has assisted caste mobility in the past history of India. Was this true of the KSD as well? Did they benefit from the fact that their migratory movement was to another linguistic area?[12]

The answer must lean towards the negative. Spatial mobility *per se* cannot promote social mobility. *A priori* one would think that the resources carried and the conditions prevailing in the new locale would be crucial elements in the outcome. Spatial mobility to a resource-laden virgin territory where the migrants became the founding fathers of a new settlement (as in Burton Stein's case-studies) would differ radically in its consequences from spatial shifts to a barren wilderness, or moves into a new polity and culture. The story of the KSD migrants falls within the latter frame. The evidence suggests that the Sinhalese kings and Portuguese rulers channelled many of them into new areas of economic activity and exploited their labour to gather commodities which they found useful. The Dutch and the British (till 1832) continued this heritage of exploitative labour services. Among the jobs into which they were directed, or which they took up by force of ecological circumstance, were such tasks as weaving cloth, cinnamon peeling, toddy tapping, coir and rope production, fishing and the transport of goods. Some of these tasks were rigorous or dangerous. Many were demeaning. Virtually all were distasteful in the eyes of the established residents. Like so many migrants the world over, most of the migrant KSD people seem to have begun with some of the worst jobs. Perhaps the only exception would have been provided by the fortunes of those who took to mercenary military activity in support of the Sinhalese kings. It was only a turn in the wheel of fortune, a reversal in Dutch policy in the mid-eighteenth century, that brought the Salāgama cinnamon

[12] See above, p. 29.

peelers a body of privileges and a special position which increased their bargaining power.

In speculating on the possible explanations for the success of the KSD caste elites, S. J. Tambiah has drawn attention to their low caste status in pre-British times. Without attributing monocausal importance to this view, he has suggested that their relatively low status provided the KSD castes with an 'incentive to break through the structures of feudalism' (feudalism being his conceptualisation of the pre-British polity).[13] However, there were yet other castes which were of low, or even lower, status; and they did not respond in the same way. A depressed condition does not by itself generate resistance.

For all that, there is value in Tambiah's notion. Its fuller realisation can be brought out by incorporating his suggestion with the concept of 'marginality'. Marginality is sometimes viewed as something characterised by peripheral status, only partially integrated with a core element. The conceptualisation here is different. Following Bruce Kapferer, I define 'marginality' as a property of structural processes in which the marginal group, institution or activity must be seen in relational terms, in its fullest interaction with other components in the polity. 'A marginal activity or institution is at one and the same time apart from, but still part of, other activities or institutions.'[14] Kapferer extends Victor Turner's use of the concept in analysing ritual to an understanding of social relations; and in this fashion views marginality as something 'betwixt and between', held in position by contradictory forces in dialectical interaction, and containing within its very marginality *potentially* transformative features, the new hybrid or new synthesis.[15] Whereas that version of marginality which emphasises the periphery–core distinction brings to mind notions of a fringe, Kapferer's version is associated with that of a sandwich situation. In this sense it has the properties of a wedge, and is armed with transformative power and radical potentialities.[16]

[13] 1963, p. 57. Cf. Swift's impressionistic suggestion that the lower status Minangkabau were in the vanguard of Minangkabau social advances simply because this condition provided a stimulus and because economic gains could be reinvested in the local status game (1971, pp. 258, 263–4).

[14] Kapferer, 1977; and 1978, p. 301.

[15] Kapferer, 1977; and 1978, pp. 290–1, 301–2. Also see Victor Turner, 1967; and 1974, pp. 231–71; and above, pp. 15–16, 138–40.

[16] Cf. the neo-Marxist emphasis on the 'middle peasant', the truly marginal man,

As largely immigrant elements and as people who resided mostly along the coast, the KSD castes in the Kotte Kingdom and in Portuguese and Dutch times were marginal groups. Initially, this marginality may have been emphasised by the occupations into which they were channelled by the state and the nature of the resources available for their sustenance. Though the evidence is by no means conclusive we have seen that they did not own significant extents of *paddy land* in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In several cases their predominant coastal residence may also have restricted the scope for swidden agriculture (chena) in the immediate hinterland, where such hinterland areas contained long-resident populations. It will be recalled that a petition from certain Karāva residents at Moratuwa in the late 1820s specifically stated that their involvement in toddy-tapping and arrack distilling arose from 'the want of lands fit for cultivation' within their village area.[17] In this sense they may have stood out as 'abnormal' social categories.

Both their origins and their avocations (within Sri Lanka) would have emphasised this 'abnormality' – their distinction from the agricultural villages in the hinterland in which the social organisation revolved around the paddy field and its agricultural cycle, and involved the exchange of services among specialist castes. One of the themes pressed in chapter three must be reiterated here: Ralph Pieris' argument that the incorporation of these immigrant groups into the caste system in new specialist roles involved a secularisation process. The roles to which they were assigned did not carry ritual meaning. They were utilitarian roles, of instrumental value to the state. Nor were these caste roles linked closely with the traditional corpus of ritual and patron–client relationships, whether those connected with familial rites of passage, monastic lands or religious ceremonies. In this context it is significant that the handful of Karāva who had penetrated the deep interior and resided in the Kandyan Kingdom were required to perform the same services

partially enmeshed in the market economy but partially retaining the independence of the subsistence farmer, as the vanguard of peasant revolutions and 'the essential soul of anti-colonial resistance' (Eric Stokes, 'The Return of the Peasant', *South Asia*, no. 5, 1976, p. 106). The scholars associated with this emphasis are Hamza Alavi and Eric Wolf.

[17] Moratuwa Petition, 1829.

as the Marakkala or Moors – another marginal group, long resident in agricultural settlements within the Kandyan country. And so John Davy describes the Moors and their services:

> They are a . . . enterprising race; and, as the Goewanse monopolize the honours, so these people do the trade of the Country . . . The whole department, *including the Carawe*, is called Madige. It may be divided into two classes – those who have lands, and are fixed; and those without lands, who are called Soolan badde. The chief wealth of both consists of cattle. For the protection which government afforded them, and for the lands they held, those of the first class were obliged to appear with bullocks [i.e. pack cattle], when required, to carry the king's rice and paddy to the store. Besides which service they had a small tax to pay of salt, salt-fish, and some other articles.[18]

The implications arising from the relatively marginal position of the KSD castes can be better understood by contrasting their situation with the other non-Goyigama castes in the coastal districts (i.e. the Low-Country). In focusing on the latter, the description will survey the interpersonal and economic transactions in a locality which depended on paddy cultivation for its livelihood, and will do so in ideal–typical terms. The implicit background will be that of a 'traditional setting' – hence, the ideal–typical time will be that of pre-colonial and early colonial days, say, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In this description the analytical framework associated with the study of patron–client relationships will be utilised.

James C. Scott has defined the 'exchange relationship between roles' identified as a patron–client relationship in the following terms: 'a special case of dyadic ties involving a largely instrumental friendship in which an individual of higher socio-economic status (patron) uses his influence and resources to provide protection and/or benefits for a person of lower status (client) who, for his part, reciprocates by offering general support and assistance, including personal services, to the patron'.[19] In Sri Lanka, the resource in the hands of patrons was land, especially paddy fields. Services, i.e. *tovil*, were rendered by client families on the basis of crop shares, usufructuary land rights and caste status. Edmund Leach has argued

[18] 1821, p. 123. Emphasis added.

[19] 1972. Also see Powell, 1970, pp. 411–15; and the essays by Wolf and Mayer in Banton (ed.), 1966.

that within the Sinhalese kingdoms of the dry zone in the past the exchange of services by a cluster of caste villages permitted the development of complex systems of labour specialisation without the extensive use of a money medium. Therefore each cluster of caste-homogeneous villages together made up a near autarkic work team.[20] It is to be suspected that the autarkic tendencies had been eroded in the different ecological conditions of the wet zone, but the principle of interdependence embodied in this heritage appears to have persisted.

The exchanges were not purely utilitarian and instrumental. As we have seen, a service caste family would render *tovil* at the 'sacramental' ceremonies of the patron. In return they would receive the customary gift, the *divel*. Rites of passage could not be fully consummated without these services. The interpersonal exchanges, therefore, carried emotional and ideational value. This was the Sri Lankan version, a pale reflection, of the Indian *jajmāni* system.[21] The ritual importance of the service castes and their integration with the wider polity was also embodied in the services which they rendered to the local Buddhist temple and/or the annual *perahära* at a sacred centre in the vicinity.[22]

Thus, in the light of James C. Scott's summary of patron–client relationships, Ken David's application of similar principles in his survey of service relationships in Sri Lanka and Asia and the ethnographic data supplied by Alex Gunasekara and Nur Yalman, one can distinguish several overlapping and interlinked features as 'typical characteristics' of caste-based patron–client transactions in a rural locality in Sri Lanka in the past:[23]

1 its basis in inequality, so that the patron (e.g. Goyigama or Navandanna) was in a superordinate position *vis-à-vis* his/her client
2 the operation of some measure of reciprocity, albeit reci-

[20] 1959, pp. 2–26.

[21] A convenient summary of the literature of the *jajmāni* system can be found in Kolenda, 1963.

[22] Malalgoda, 1976, pp. 51–4; Yalman, 1961; and H.-D. Evers, *Monks, Priests and Peasants: A Study of Buddhism and Social Structure in Central Ceylon*, Leiden: 1972.

[23] Scott, 1972; David, 1968; Yalman, 1961, pp. 78–112; and Gunasekara, 1965, pp. 297–303.

procity that was by no means balanced, so that the client had the right to *divel* from the superior-status patron

3 the multiple nature of the links between patron and client so that they were characterised by 'diffuse flexibility'

4 the relations between patron and client were 'correlatively stratified' so that 'a given asymmetrical relationship between superordinate and subordinate' was reproduced in other situations in which they interacted

5 the highly localised spatial setting in which these exchanges took place

6 the face-to-face personalised character of the exchanges

7 the long-standing, often hereditary, nature of the exchanges so that families may have been linked in this fashion for several generations.

Inevitably, such connections supported the growth of mutual affection between patrons and clients. This is noticed especially with reference to the Rajaka washermen. There was close contact between a washerman and his patron. He was the only 'low caste' man allowed to enter the house of 'high caste' patrons. And he would often be 'addressed familiarly as hena mame or ridi nenda or redi nenda'.[24] Scott has emphasised how such emotional ties and 'the very diffuseness of the patron–client linkage contributes to its survival even during rapid social change'.[25] The sacred nature of certain exchanges provided this framework of relations with ideological legitimation which obscured its inegalitarian and exploitative aspects and gave the system resiliency and strength.

This system of relationships was also held in place by secular sanctions. The numerical weight of the Goyigama caste, the landed resources commanded by the Goyigama notables and the positions of authority which those notables held in the Sinhalese (and early colonial) regimes amounted to a powerful sanction against any social revolution. And behind the Goyigama was the coercive power of the monarchy. One can perceive how the Navandanna, Rajaka, Wahumpura, Beravā and other non-Goyigama castes were enmeshed and encapsulated in a powerful system. And once their social subordination had

[24] Gunasekara, 1965, p. 299. [25] 1970, pp. 3–5.

taken root it was routinely perpetuated by sumptuary rules, the forms of deferential address and the conventions of social distancing. Their sense of inferiority was sustained by the socialisation process, by their habits of saying '*ehemai, hamu*' (yes, master).

In contrast, the transactions of the KSD castes with the Goyigama were less multiplex, less personalised, more contractual, shorter in duration and even transitory; and lacking in affective bonds of any sort. But they were not outside the social system – except, perhaps, during the initial stage following the advent of their 'pioneers'. They were within the polity and had even been assigned occupational tasks in several areas. They themselves were in the process of being incorporated into Sinhalese society. As I have argued earlier, the Sinhala language, the Buddhist religion and the machinery of state were among the forces that furthered this process of integration. It is to be suspected, too, that some of the migrant groups were largely male in composition, so that local liaisons must have been necessary in the early years. They were not endogamous and wholly autarkic in their marriage networks. Thus, even in the 1810s the tradition existed that the Salāgama had tended to draw their brides from among the Wahumpura.[26]

The very process of integration would have served to underline their marginality and the discrepant nature of their remnant marginality just as their marginality enabled them to take advantage of the new opportunities arising after the advent of the Western powers. It is essential to take note of this integrative trend in understanding why the reactions of the KSD castes were not in the direction of separative fission so much as a modification of the Sinhalese social structure. Therefore, the greater their progress in acculturation the more intolerable they found their marginality. That is why their marginality must be conceived of as a 'wedge marginality' rather than something that was located at the periphery. Their structural situation carried transformative leverage.

In their marginal structural position, the KSD castes, as I conjecture, would have been much less resigned to accept the marks of caste inferiority in their relations with the Goyigama;

[26] de Saram, 1906, p. 6; and Davy, 1821, p. 126.

that is, in those transactions in which caste symbolism came into play. In their marginal situation, the social airs and the forms of derogatory address which the 'first class Goyigama' (at the very least) employed in their relations with KSD people would have created greater resentment than it did among the other non-Goyigama castes. In the case of the Salāgama, this situation would have been aggravated by their cinnamon-gathering activities, because these brought them into abrasive interaction with the controllers of land, Goyigama and other castes alike.

The combined influence of deprived status and structural marginality (in Kapferer's extended definition as a population that is 'routinely and systematically exposed to contradictory processes') in generating determined resistance is neatly encapsulated by the comment of a Goyigama entrepreneur in explaining the past history of the Karāva and their success in commercial enterprise: the Karāva, he said, were caught 'between the sea and the Goyigama'.[27] Here, then, one sees vestiges of what I would call 'the Jewish sense of threatening enclosure' – a feeling which could stimulate resentment, disciplined resistance, flexibility and innovation.

The structural marginality of the KSD castes also encouraged adaptability and flexibility. They were a comparatively late infusion into the Sinhalese social structure. As implied in the preceding paragraphs, this meant that they were not completely enmeshed in the traditional system and its concomitant behavioural patterns. Nor were they bound to land and the cycle of paddy culture (or even swidden agriculture) to the same degree as most other castes. This implies that they were less hidebound by tradition, more mobile, and more flexible in their attitudes, which in turn suggests that they were willing to seek new pastures with greater readiness and to seize upon new avenues of employment with greater alacrity than the older castes. The latter would have been more entrenched in their old ways. In previous chapters we saw that it was considered 'a degradation for a high caste person to employ himself' in artisan occupations; and a further illustration of the constraints arising from the traditional norms was provided in the reluc-

[27] My interview with C. A. Harischandra, 28 Apr. 1975.

tance shown by certain Low-Country residents (probably Goyigama) in the 1790s about participating in the manufacture of coir and the cultivation of cinnamon, because of the inferior status attached to these labours.[28] While ready to grow coconuts, cinnamon and coffee for the market, the Goyigama appear to have shown an aversion to the trades associated with coconut by-products. In the colonial era this was to deny themselves several useful economic opportunities.

There is a striking parallel between the situation and progress of the KSD castes and the story of the Ibo of Nigeria during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. According to K. O. Dike and Paul Mercier, an insufficiency of land strongly influenced the history of the Ibo. They were induced to disperse, migrate and become 'more cosmopolitan', whereas the Yoruba 'exhibited the very opposite of these characteristics'.[29] It may be going too far to cast the Goyigama in the same mould as the Yoruba, but the strong similarities in the circumstances of the Ibo and the KSD are extended further by the fact that the Ibo provided a significant proportion of the Nigerian elite that emerged in British colonial times.[30]

In the foregoing pages, the comparative mode of analysis has been employed in two directions: comparing the KSD with the Goyigama on the one hand, and with the remaining non-Goyigama castes on the other. In pre-British times, the KSD shared with the latter a position of status subordination to the Goyigama. But they were distinct from both the Goyigama and the other castes in being less tied to wet paddy cultivation. And they were structurally marginal. Hence the growth of conflict with the Goyigama and the development of adaptive strategies which sought to break through the structures of subordination and which eventually, in the nineteenth century, attempted to reduce their marginality through further integrative actions (e.g. Buddhist revitalisation, caste claims, rather than a jettisoning of caste).

[28] See above, p. 63.

[29] Paul Mercier, 'The Meaning of "Tribalism" in Black Africa', in Pierre van den Berghe (ed.), *Africa: Social Problems of Change and Conflict*, San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Co., 1965, p. 491, citing K. O. Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830–1885*, Oxford: 1956.

[30] Ottenberg, 1959, p. 131; and personal communication from Dr Adrian Peace.

These socio-structural conditions and the responses which they stimulated were, in my view, among the most crucial factors promoting the rise of the Karāva. And these factors were operative through much of the period under review. But they also apply to the Salāgama and the Durāva. The question then arises as to how the Karāva outpaced these two castes in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. One must peel off another layer.

KSD: Karāva–factors favouring the Karāva

A distinguishing characteristic of the Karāva today is the fact that a substantial number of them are Christians, usually Catholics. As noted earlier, under the authority of C. R. de Silva, at one stage in the seventeenth century the majority of Karāva were Catholics. It is possible that their structurally marginal situation encouraged the Karāva to move in a separative direction and to accept the alien faith, but I have also indicated in chapter two that their Christianisation may have commenced in south India (as with the Parava), and that their advent in increasing numbers to the island may have been in collaborative association with the Portuguese. While substantial numbers appear to have become Buddhists in subsequent years and though the majority of Karāva today are probably Buddhist, a large proportion of the community is either Catholic or Protestant.[31] In contrast, today, Salāgama Christians are relatively few in number and the Salāgama are reckoned among the staunchest of Buddhist castes, though second to the Wahumpura who proudly claim that in British times no member of their caste was converted to Christianity.

Did this circumstance make a difference for the Karāva? Under the Portuguese it did. There can be little doubt that the Karāva were a favoured caste in Portuguese times because they were becoming staunch Catholics. Among 'the many favours and privileges' they received, one suspects, were symbols of prestige. It can be speculated that the adoption of royal symbols during their funeral and wedding ceremonies, and the Karāva headmen's adoption of status attributes that had pre-

[31] See above, p. 30.

viously been the preserve of the Goyigama aristocracy, were results of the Portuguese period of rule. One would normally have expected the participation of the Karāva in fishing to have gained for them an abysmally low ritual position, as with so many fisher castes in India. Yet at least two Dutch observers in the second quarter of the eighteenth century ranked them next to the Goyigama or recorded marks of prestige in the life-style of their headmen.[32] It is possible that this was a heritage of the Portuguese period rather than a benefit secured in the intervening period extending from the 1650s to the 1720s.

As new migrants the KSD castes and the Bharathas (Parava) appear to have intermarried rather more freely with the foreigners (especially with the Portuguese) than the other castes. But here, too, the Karāva were in the forefront. Referring specifically to the Karāva caste in 1707, an Oratorian Catholic missionary observed that 'many of them [were] related to the Whites and many of the Mesticos [came] from them'.[33] In that day and age this was by no means a dubious distinction and may have provided considerable advantages to the Karāva.

Such intermarriages, as well as Catholicism and Christianity, could also be regarded as transmitting agencies of Western culture. Indeed, the British evangelicals consciously employed their religion in this fashion, and believed that Christianity and commerce would be mutually supportive.[34] Taking this argument yet further, one must take into consideration the possibility that the Christian religion encouraged the implantation of accumulative goals; and that the Karāva, the caste which appears to have had the largest proportion of Christians at all times since the sixteenth century, benefited disproportionately. Obviously generated by Max Weber's interpretation that relates religion to the rise of capitalism in early modern Europe, such an argument need not rest on the actual religious composition of the successful capitalists and entrepreneurs in the period of British rule. Indeed, a substantial number of these men were Buddhists.[35] The point is that these capitalists were mostly

[32] See above, pp. 92–3. [33] Gomez, 1916, p. 21.

[34] Eric Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India*, Oxford University Press, 1959, pp. 34–40.

[35] Even Jeronis and Susew de Soysa were Buddhists by upbringing. So were a good number of Karāva merchants and plantation owners, especially those from Panadura and the Southern Province.

Low-Countrymen. The Low-Country Sinhalese districts had been subject to several centuries of Christian proselytisation. To be a Buddhist against this background was different from being a Buddhist in the Kandyan Kingdom. It can be argued that the Low-Country Sinhalese Buddhists had imbibed Christian values and practices. Indeed, the ascetic practices to which we have previously called attention and which were a pronounced aspect of the revitalisation movement during the British period have been partly attributed to the influence of the Protestant sects. The 'new orientation in Buddhism' that was crystallised in the Anagarika Dharmapala is described thus by Obeyesekere: 'This orientation was an active involvement in the world. The model for this involvement was a Protestant model: the *anagarika* is the modern Sinhalese analogue of an early Calvinist type of reformism with its increasing this-worldly asceticism.'[36] In sum, on similar lines one can come up with a percolation theory which argues that capitalist values entered the Low-Country Sinhalese bourgeoisie via creeping Christianity via Buddhist-recoil-against-Christianity.

Immediate objections arise. The Weberian thesis distinguishes the influence of the Protestant ethic from that of Catholicism and lays specific emphasis on the influence of Calvinist dogma within the Protestant tradition. In this view the Calvinist doctrine of predestination and the organisation of Calvinist religion resulted in the isolation of its followers and in religious anxiety about salvation, thereby leading earnest followers towards norms of inner-worldly ascetism and concepts of duty. These values were in tune with the demands of capitalism and were conducive to rational economic activity of a self-sustaining nature.[37] Yet in Sri Lanka, though large numbers were nominal Protestants in Dutch times, there is little evidence that Dutch Presbyterianism took deep root among the Sinhalese people. The large majority of practising Christians have always been Catholics. Furthermore, the Portuguese in the East were notoriously unsuccessful in their commercial activity. Indigenous converts had a secondary role in the Portuguese Indian economy, the dominant role being taken by

[36] Obeyesekere, 1975, pp. 252–7 esp. 252; also 1970; and the articles by Ames, 1963, 1967 and 1973.

[37] Weber, 1965. Also see Landes (ed.), 1969, pp. 7–11; and Tambiah, 1973, pp. 2–3.

Hindu merchants, generally Saraswat Brahmins or Gujarati *vanias*. Thus, in the seventeenth century 80 per cent of the people holding *rendas* (government rents) in Goa and other Portuguese possessions in India were Hindu, and only 20 per cent were Christian.[38] In Sri Lanka, we have seen that the puritan colouring and enthusiastic pietism which threaded the movement for Buddhist revitalisation served as a font of legitimation for *arriviste* leaders as well as a means by which they distanced themselves from the masses.[39] Moreover, Buddhist revivalism called for new 'fortresses'. In confronting the Christian missions the Buddhist activists were led to adopt techniques which these missions had perfected. It was hardly surprising that Buddhist merchants regarded economic strength as an important line of defence. Since they were themselves locked in commercial competition with Indian and Moorish traders, economic nationalism and protectionist goals could serve both Buddha and Mammon.[40] In the final analysis, the percolation theory cannot be maintained. At best, one has to fall back on the generalised argument that the Christian denominations were component forces within the process of Westernisation in the island.

There were other points of difference between the Karāva on the one hand and the Durāva–Salāgama on the other hand, which may have been to the former's advantage. In the 1820s the Karāva easily outnumbered these two castes. Within the Maritime Provinces (Sinhalese regions) they numbered 55,293, and constituted 15.7 per cent of the population, whereas the Salāgama and Durāva had proportions of 7.5 and 5.6 per cent respectively (see tables 1–4). This provides the possibility that the Karāva had a 'critical mass' to draw upon at a turning-point in the island's history. It is difficult, however, to give any weight to this idea. It will be remembered that the Salāgama spearheaded the attacks against Goyigama privileges during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The roots of differential achievement appear to have been qualitative not demographic-quantitative.

In a variant version of this argument one can contend that the Karāva had demographic concentrations at strategic loca-

[38] M. N. Pearson, 1972, pp. 61–73; and 1973, p. 37.
[39] See above, pp. 212–15. [40] K. M. de Silva, 1973b, pp. 390–1.

tions within the Low-Country. The residential location of most Karāva communities along the waterfront was of some advantage in utilising the economic opportunities associated with the import–export trade dating from pre-colonial times. One of the centres of Karāva population lay in the coastal strip immediately south of Colombo, stretching from Galkissa to Panadura (see map 7). Another lay along the seaboard north of Colombo extending from Kotahena and the Kelani Ganga to Negombo. Both concentrations were well situated to take advantage of the commercial and other employment opportunities at the growth centre of Colombo. Again, there were Karāva concentrations in the immediate vicinity of Galle.

Some secondary weight must be attached to this factor. A location within reach of economic opportunities is obviously a necessary condition for any sort of social advance. The problem here is that the Low-Country Goyigama and a number of other castes shared such proximity to Colombo. There were Durāva concentrations in the Thimbirigasyaya and Dehiwala localities near Colombo, and Salāgama concentrations in Modera-Mutwal and Borella. And Karāva villages were not the only villages along the strand, though they probably account for a high proportion. Therefore, the Karāva did not possess unique locational advantages.[41]

Where the Karāva differed from the Salāgama and the Durāva and all other castes was in their heavy involvement in fishing at some stages in the past. There were non-Karāva fishermen, but most fishermen have been Karāva (chapter three). This background has attracted considerable attention as a possible source of Karāva success in entrepreneurship.[42] Hans-Dieter Evers was one of the first to argue so. He saw in this background one of the decisive causes for the successes of the Karāva. In particular, he argued that beach seining operations involved forms of organisation which were not far removed from the organisational forms prevalent under modern capitalism so that they provided ideal stepping-stones, in a

[41] This assessment is an alteration of the opinions conveyed in chap. 4 of Roberts (ed.), 1979, p. 202; and in my earlier essay in 1969.

[42] Evers, 1964, pp. 134–9; Kenneth David, 1968; and Roberts, 1969. Evers conducted brief surveys of two Karāva fishing villages along the southwestern coast with the assistance of Hermann Kulke.

socio-cultural sense, to capitalist entrepreneurship. I propose, here, to expand on his suggestion and to indicate the manner in which the patterns of fishing in Sri Lanka and the occupational culture of its fisherfolk were particularly beneficial for the emergence of capitalist enterprise. In doing so, I am fortunate to have the studies undertaken recently by R. L. Stirrat and Paul Alexander. Stirrat has provided a detailed analysis of the modes of production and exchange at a Karāva fishing village fifty miles north of Colombo near Chilaw and information on beach seining at a neighbouring Tamil village.[43] Paul Alexander has provided an account of the contemporary factional struggles and the organisation of beach seining at the Karāva village of Gahavälla near Tangalle on the southern coast, and set this account against the background of its historical development.[44] In addition, comparative insights are provided by Polly Hill's description of seine fishing among the Anlo branch of the Ewe people in Ghana, and by Raymond Firth's study of Malay fishermen on the northeastern coast of Malaya on the basis of fieldwork in 1939–40 and 1963.[45]

Fishing in Sri Lanka: a pathway to commerical capitalism? Fishing in Sri Lanka, as elsewhere, is a mode of livelihood which contains considerable complexity and variety. The social organisation of production can differ according to the technologies associated with the various forms of fishing that are pursued. Our account will focus on three of the most important types of fishing: deep sea and inshore gill-net fishing from *theppaṇs* (catamarans), deep sea fishing and trolling in *oruva* (outrigger canoes), and beach seining with drag nets (*mādäl*); and will exclude the influence of recent technological innovations in the form of nylon nets, fibre-glass boats and outboard motors.

At Wellagoda, the pseudonymous name given to the Karāva village studied by Stirrat, from whom I quote below, the principal fishing craft has been, and is, the *theppaṇ*. The 'capital equipment involved in *theppaṇ* fishing is highly divisible'. It can be built up piecemeal and easily; therefore, the threshold of entry into the trade is low. The basic instruments of production consist of nets and a *theppaṇ*. In the past, the nets were cotton

[43] 1975. [44] 1973, 1977 and 1975.
[45] Firth, 1966, and Hill, 1970, pp. 30–52.

nets, which soon wear out and, at best, the *theppaṇ* itself lasts four or five years. There are no long-term assets. In relation to the technical needs of production, there is little for male children to inherit except occupational experience. The contrast with land-based sedentary agriculture is marked. A senior generation controls little which enables them to control the junior generation. 'Household fission is simple.'

Indeed, a nuclear household, preferably with two adult males, is the ideal unit of production. The larger *theppaṇs* require a crew of two and the division of labour in fishing is minimal. The basic division of labour is within the family. The men fish and the women sell the fish. Subject to the qualifications noted below, 'there is no technically determined need for inter-household cooperation'. 'The forces in the economy work so as to disintegrate larger domestic units into the smallest which can cope adequately with the technology.'

This condition of 'individuation' is not only promoted by the forces of production. External relations in the form of the mode of exchange emphasise the same element. The fish is sold on the beach itself, or at a nearby market by the womenfolk. At this market, prices are fixed by haggling, in other words by the laws of supply and demand. The market situation is atomistic, contractual, monetised and involves no long-term association. Reciprocity is not generalised and *seeks* no balance. 'The morality of the market-place is one of maximisation; of getting something for nothing', that is, what is recognised in the anthropological literature as 'negative reciprocity'.[46] In other words, the mode of exchange involves competitive individualism. The ethos that results is then 'conveyed into the social fabric of Wellagoda' by the women fish vendors. Given the female influence in the socialisation process, one can see the wider implications of their role in obtaining a livelihood from fish.

In consequence, one sees in Wellagoda 'the continual attempt by households to maximise their income'; and to do so at all times. Money is a means to a further end, however: the raising of one's status in the community. 'The maximisation and competition which Wellagoda households engage in takes

[46] Stirrat, 1975, p. 150; Sahlins, 1974, pp. 192ff; and Bronislaw Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1922, pp. 176–94.

the form of social competition: of conspicuous consumption and investment; of large dowries and fine clothes.'

Not all nuclear families have two adult males, or one adult male and a male adolescent. There are generational cycles. At any point of time, one household might have too little labour and substantial capital. Or it might be the other way about. Such situations encourage certain forms of interhousehold cooperation. One is known as *havul rassāva*, or 'partnership work', and has two variants: (*a*) where two men of separate households pool their equipment, work one *theppaṇ* and share proceeds; and (*b*) where two or more households pool their resources and share proceeds equally. The second is that of 'child borrowing', where an adolescent male is taken into a household and helps to operate the *theppaṇ*.

Such occasions of cooperation, it will be seen, are dictated by economic rationality. They are also temporary arrangements (and can even terminate in acrimonious dispute). They are considered a deviant from the norm. For cooperation is seen as a loss, a *pāḍuva*. This is surely significant. Cooperation in *havul rassāva* involves an equal sharing of the fish harvest. And such balanced reciprocity is a *pāḍuva*: something that 'denies the possibility of superiority over one's partners'.

In contrast to their life at Wellagoda, the arrangements adopted at the fishing camps (*wāḍiya*), to which the men migrate seasonally, are marked by cooperation. They live in temporary huts which house men from different households. *Havul rassāva* relationships are common, even among men who did not adopt such partnerships at Wellagoda during the previous season. The fish is sold at fixed prices to traders who often have given advances to the fishermen. Though it is still commodity production, the mode of exchange is different.[47]

And what significance does this contemporary case-study hold for the fishermen along the southwestern coast over the past four centuries? What revelations does it produce regarding the occupational culture of fishing in the past? Most Sinhalese fishermen in the past, as today, relied on the *oruva* not the *theppaṇ*.[48] These craft demand crews of four to seven men, with

[47] Stirrat, 1975; 1974, pp. 189–206.

[48] Hornell, 1920, p. 157; 1926, pp. 48, 54; A. H. Malpas, 1924; and Sopher, 1965, pp. 9–10.

the four-man craft being used for deep sea trolling and the seven-man craft for inshore and deep sea line fishing. As this would suggest, partnership arrangements must have been much more common. Certainly, Paul Alexander has found that 'the concept of share-ownership [is] well-developed' among the fishermen he studied and that in most villages a large proportion of the population was involved in such arrangements.[49] Again, whereas Wellagoda is located in a sandy belt of the coast and has hardly any other means of sustenance, most Sinhalese fishing villages further to the south contain coconut groves which provide additional sources of sustenance. In the past some villages would have been able to indulge in chena cultivation and yet others would have had the opportunity to acquire or lease paddy and garden land. It can also be presumed that thriving markets of the sort found near Wellagoda today were not a common feature along the southwestern coast in, say, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Nevertheless, having taken such qualifications into account, there is much in Stirrat's account to suggest that the occupational culture of fisherfolk must have been conducive to the emergence of a capitalist ethos. It endorses the conclusions drawn by Firth and Alexander from their comparisons of agrarian and fishing economies within a peasant society.[50] Fishermen do not live on fish alone. Their work is production for exchange. 'It is governed not by immediate use values but by exchange values.' It involves 'very high levels of both risk and uncertainty' and yields cannot be raised substantially by higher labour inputs.[51] In considerable measure these features must have prevailed in the past as well. In chapter four it has been shown that salted fish was an important item in the Sinhalese diet in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and that a market for fresh fish existed in certain localities. Through their occupations, then, fisherfolk must have gained experience in market relations and exchange values, while individual enterprise must have been encouraged by the social organisation of production.

The fishing industry was a fruitful breeding ground for entrepreneurship in yet more specific and more significant

[49] 1975, pp. 335–6. [50] Firth, 1966, pp. 2–7; and Alexander, 1977, pp. 247–9.
[51] Quotations from Stirrat, 1975, p. 148; and Alexander, 1977, p. 248.

ways. For one: the pattern of seasonal migrations (see map 3) forced upon a large number of fishermen by the onslaught of the southwest monsoon carries significant implications. In Sri Lanka, these migrations are not a contemporary innovation. For several centuries, Sri Lankan fishermen along the length and breadth of the southwest coast have pitched their *wāḍiya* in the Mannar locality, or along the eastern coast, at suitable periods of the year. One implication is the discipline and the adaptability this calls for. The fishermen must annually shift gears from the pronounced individualism of their natal villages to the more collectivist environment of the *wāḍiya*, and then back again. There is a second and associated implication: spatial mobility and distant ventures must become second nature. In this training, they would have been matched by the Salāgama cinnamon peelers. And such experience must have been of great value in the nineteenth century when new opportunities arose in the island interior. Early in the mid-nineteenth century a journey to plantations in such places as Matale, Lower Bulatgama and Nuwara Eliya, or the opening of coconut plantations in the malarial Kurunegala District were not ventures which many Low-Country Sinhalese entered upon with equanimity. One can see how the Karāva and Salāgama (and the Moors) might have nurtured those persons who were more willing to take such venturesome and migrant steps.

There is a parallel here with the Anlo seine fishermen in Ghana. For over seventy years, these fishermen have participated in migrant fishing activity along the coast of West Africa, moving up as far north as Sierra Leone and as far south as the Congo.[52] Their beach seining operations with the *yevudor* (the beach seining drag net) were organised on capitalist lines. What is relevant for our purposes here is to note the apparent connection between migrant venturesomeness and capitalist techniques (even if the nature of the connection is not too clear). Apart from fishing on capitalist lines, the Anlo people have achieved fame for the manner in which they cultivate shallots (a type of onion): their shallot-growing industry is reckoned an example of 'perhaps the most capital-intensive farming in West Africa'.[53]

[52] Hill, 1970, pp. 33–4. [53] *Ibid.*, p. 30n.

Another way in which the fishing industry assisted the emergence of a Kārava elite was perceived by Evers when he suggested that beach seines were a nurturing ground for Karāva capitalists. In order to establish this argument, considerable descriptive and historical detail must be entered into.

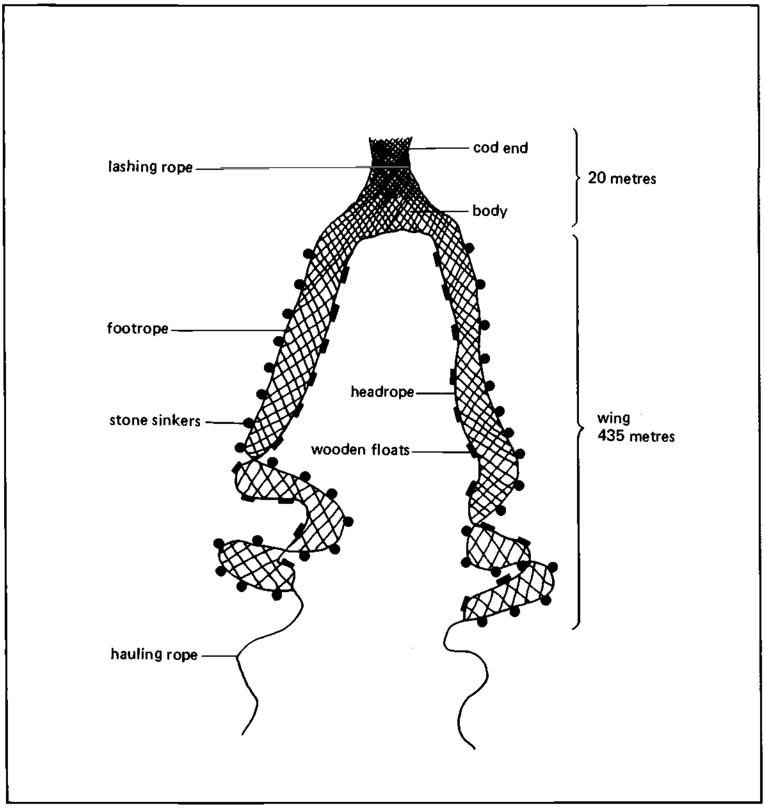
Beach seine fishing requires a specific coastal topography: a coastal shelf which provides sandy stretches free from rocks and either a flat or gently sloping beach. These requirements are met in several parts of Sri Lanka. Though there are several fishing villages which lack this requirement and therefore specialise in deep sea or inshore fishing, beach seining is widely prevalent along the southwestern coast. However, relatively calm waters are required and this type of fishing is vulnerable to winds and monsoons. Except for those residing near ecologically sheltered stations, *mādäl* fishermen on the southwestern coast migrate to the east coast or the locality of Mannar during the southwestern monsoon (see map 3). Every now and then in contemporary Sri Lanka beach seining produces a big harvest of fish, sometimes even to the extent of covering a whole season's capital costs. Even today, the highest returns are said to come from this type of fishing and beach seines account for about 35 per cent of the island's fish harvest, as much as that brought in by the mechanised boats.[54]

It must be strongly emphasised that the 'seine net is one of the oldest pieces of fishing gear of which there is record in the world'.[55] The *māhā däla* (also *mādäla*, meaning 'great net'), as it is called in Sinhala, probably pre-dates the advent of the Portuguese: for the Portuguese *tombo* of 1614 refers to 'two nets which fish along the shore' at Alutgama and to 'tones with lines'.[56] It was a type of fishing to which the Portuguese themselves were no strangers, for beach seining has been long prevalent along the coasts of Portugal and the Maghreb in northern Africa.

[54] This paragraph is based on Joseph Pearson, 1923, p. 76; Hornell, 1943, p. 46; Alexander, 1977; and personal communications from Thomas Glazer, postgraduate student at the Department of Geography, Heidelberg University. At Gahavälla, however, returns are severely affected by the excess number of nets and the need to have a system of net rotation. Cf., too, the report of high returns in the Virgin Islands in Warren T. Morrill, 'Ethnoicthyology of the Cha-Cha', *Ethnology*, vol. 6, 1957, p. 406.

[55] Hill, p. 44n.

[56] Information communicated personally by Dr C. R. de Silva. See P. E. Pieris (ed.), 1949, pp. 23, 48. 'Tones' refers to *dhonies*.



2 The *mādäla* or beach seine net; the figure is not to scale
Reproduced from Paul Alexander, *Sri Lankan Fisherman*, Australian National University Monographs on South Asia, no. 8, by courtesy of the publishers, South Asian History Section, Australian National University

The *mādäla* itself is a drag net of enormous size, with a large bag (cod end plus body) about 48 yards (44 m) in length at one end and with two wings attached to it (see fig. 2). Each of these wings could be as long as 400–500 yards (366–457 m). Each wing has a hauling rope made of coir attached to it, each rope usually extending about 500 yards (457 m). When completely set out the *mādäla* could measure more than three miles (4.827 km) in length. The cod end is made of hemp or cotton yarn, the

body of cotton, and the wings of coarse coir twine.[57] In the early 1970s the *mādäl* at Gahavälla cost about Rs. 2,750 each.[58] To this should be added the cost of a special seine canoe, the *pāruva*, and other gear. In sum, it is evident that considerable capital investments are called for. The seine net is divisible, however, and the wings could be built up in parts, while old netting could be used. But netting lacks durability so that constant replenishment is necessary.

In the early nineteenth century, the *mādäla* was smaller in size and made of coir and hemp. The description in the previous paragraph incorporates an innovation introduced in the middle decades of the nineteenth century by migrant Indian fishermen: nets of larger size with their cod ends and bodies made of cotton and hemp, and with a capacity to enclose a much larger space than the older net. This new seine net was initially described as a *nūldäla* and its diffusion among the Sinhalese fishermen generated jealousy and argument. In the 1860s the range of prices quoted for this net varied from £80 to £150 (Rs. 800 to Rs. 1,500), contrasting with the figures of £22 to £60 (Rs. 220 to Rs. 600) quoted for the older type of net.[59] However, it was more efficient than the older and smaller net and seems to have gradually gained ascendancy.

Beach seine operations among the Sinhalese and the Anlo bear a striking similarity. In summary, here, it can be noted that the *mādäla* is taken out in a *pāruva* or *vallam* with one end of the rope left ashore. When the full length of the rope and wing have been paid out the boat runs parallel to the shore for a short distance, and then runs back with its crew paying out the other wing and the hauling rope. In other words, a funnel-shaped enclosure is created. The boat is usually manned by a crew of eight or nine fishermen under an experienced hand, known as the *mandrādi* or *marakkalai*, who directs the operation. Once the

[57] Joseph Pearson, 1923, pp. 76–7, 132; Alexander, 1977, p. 232; and Canagaratnam and Medcof, 1956.

[58] Alexander, 1975, p. 45. In the late 1960s a large cotton *yevudor* on the Ghanaian coast cost a little over £1,000 (and a nylon net about £3,000) according to Hill (1970, pp. 42–3), while a German observer in the 1900s estimated the cost at about 400–500 Deutschmarks.

[59] W. D. Wright, A. R. Dawson and C. Perera, 'Report of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the sea fisheries of Ceylon', *Sessional Paper No. 4 of 1868*, pp. 18, 36, 41, 47 and *passim*.

net is set at least five men leave the boat and go ashore to participate in the hauling-in of the net. This involves two lines of men pulling in the ropes in a systematic and coordinated manner.[60] Alexander stresses that 'the essential feature of beach seining is that the fish are enclosed by the net and chased towards the beach, not dragged in by the mesh'. He insists that in consequence a team of eight or nine men can cope with an entire operation and that 'a heavy catch requires no more labour than for an empty net'. But Gahavälla is sheltered by a headland and its nets are smaller than the average. When the currents and wind are against the course of the net, forty or fifty men might be needed on each rope. In the twenty-one cases listed by Canagaratnam and Medcof, the average number of men involved in each operation was thirty-one, with a low of fourteen and a high of seventy.[61] The average net requires from 2–3 hours to set and haul. In a variant version of seining known as shoal seining, however, 3–4 hours would be required, as well as a few more boats.

In the villages surveyed by Evers, the boat crews, the *mandrādis* and the owners of the *mādäl* and *pāruvas* were all Karāva. In the hauling of nets, however, casual labour from other castes, for instance, from the Oli, Wahumpura and Salāgama, might also be employed at times. When they migrated to the eastern coast, local labour from among the Tamils and Veddas would be recruited as additional hauling men.

It will be only too apparent that a division of labour and a measure of specialisation enters the organisation of beach seining, besides a contrast between a capitalist employer and his employees. These divisions are reflected in the manner in which the proceeds are shared out. The sharing formulas vary a great deal among the Anlo, but one example will suffice: according to the nine-part formula, three parts may go to the net owner, one part to the men who man the boats, one part to those with special responsibilities (e.g. the bos'n), one part to those who regularly mend the nets, and three parts to the company members 'on the basis of some system . . . which takes account of the achievements and skills of individuals'. Among the Sinhalese and the Malays the sharing-out systems are less

[60] Evers, 1964, pp. 137–9; and Alexander, 1977, pp. 232–3.
[61] Canagaratnam and Medcof, 1956.

complex, but are similar in principle. Evers found that it was customary for the net owner(s) to receive one-third of the total proceeds, for the boatmen to receive one-fourth and for five-twelfths to be distributed among the labourers who hauled the net in. *Pukat tarrek*, as beach seining is referred to by the Malays, involves a basic division into two parts: one part to the boat owner and the net owner, and the other part to the crew. But within this framework, extra shares are allocated for those who fulfil special functions, such as the net repairs.[62]

Since substantial capital inputs are required for beach seining, it is hardly surprising that Evers, Hill, Stirrat and Alexander are agreed that it encourages the emergence of class differentiation within the fishing community. Among the Anlo fishermen Polly Hill found that 'a propertied class of net-owner has slowly emerged during the last half-century'.[63] At the Tamil village of Demalagama (pseudonym) Stirrat found 25 *mādäl*, of which 15 were owned by fourteen individuals and the other 10 were held by various combinations of shareholders. The net owners secure labour through patron–client networks and financial advances. In consequence, while about one hundred men have some share in a *mādäl*, 'well over 1000 are directly involved in madel fishing'. In short, beach seining at Demalagama involves production relations between proletarians and capitalists, albeit capitalists with proletarian origins or links.

Stirrat indicates that class polarisation within Demalagama may be a relatively recent development and does not appear to have been the pattern in the past. 'The myth today at all social levels in Demalagama is that there were very few propertyless workers' originally.[64] The validity of this folk-belief might have to be pushed back several centuries. In the early and middle decades of the nineteenth century it is evident that some *mādäl* were held individually, though shareowning combinations were also found. Indeed, some fishermen had as many as 6 or 7 *mādäl*.[65] The diffusion of the newer and larger seine net during the mid-nineteenth century may have disrupted this process of class differentiation and introduced a cyclical pattern, because

[62] Firth, 1966, p. 374; Polly Hill, 1970, pp. 34–5; and Evers, 1964, pp. 137–9.

[63] Hill, 1970, pp. 41–3. [64] 1975, p. 159.

[65] See record of evidence collected by the Fisheries Commission of 1867 in Wright *et. al.*, *Sessional Paper No. 4 of 1868.*

it required greater investment and encouraged shareowning combinations.[66] But in time the growth of a propertied class of *mādäl* owners must have been resumed.

A *mādäl* owner is not only a fisherman capitalist. He is a labour contractor of sorts, a village patron and a wheeler-dealer who can organise a beach seine operation and find suitable outlets for the catch. Since beach seining can occasionally harvest large catches of fish, good marketing outlets are necessary. Thus, the Demalagama net owners are linked into a different trading network from that of their neighbours at Wellagoda, while the Wellagoda fishermen themselves move into a different exchange network when they go to the migrant fishing camps. Rather than disposing of their catch 'to a large number of small traders through a mass of short-term transactions in an atomistic type of market' as at Wellagoda, the Demalagama net owners have links with fish *mudalalis* at the Pettah, the principal market in Colombo.[67] They often receive cash advances from these fish merchants and contract to sell their catch at a fixed price. Similarly, the fishermen who migrate to the sparsely populated coasts near Mannar or along the eastern seaboard arrange contracts of this type with a fish *mudalali* (or with several *mudalalis*). Sometimes these *mudalalis* are themselves middlemen linked to commission agents, or large fish-dealers, at St John's Market in the Pettah, Colombo in a similar fashion – advances against supply of fish at fixed prices. While the fixed prices suggest an exploitative element, the *mudalali*–financiers shoulder the market risks, which are considerable with such a perishable commodity.[68]

Today, most of these fish *mudalalis* have a small staff of employees to man their trading operation: 'to ice, treat and box the fish, keep accounts and drive the fish lorries'. Most have also 'developed transport interests as a sideline to their fishing business'. And the bigger *mudalalis* run simultaneous operations in three or four different camps. Not surprisingly but nevertheless significantly, these fish *mudalalis* mostly originate from fishing or fish-trading backgrounds and some had started their careers as fishermen. This is significant because it is another point of difference from the trading network which

[66] *Ibid.*, pp. 18, 36.
[67] Stirrat, 1975, pp. 159–60; and 1974, pp. 196–7.
[68] *Ibid.*, see also Alexander, 1977; and 1973, chap. 11.

Stirrat observed near Wellagoda, for the small-scale fish traders who purchase the fisherman's catch are mostly from the consumer areas in the hinterland, while the *vankārayo* (traders with vans) can also be from trading or professional (e.g. schoolteacher) backgrounds.

Taking this information back in time, one can safely presume that the *mudalalis* who were associated with migrant fishing *wāḍiyas* in the past were also from a fishing background. Before the twentieth century, of course, there were no lorries and no ice.[69] But the organisers of migrant fishing camps and the owners of several *mādäl* had to make arrangements for the drying and salting of the fish and for the eventual sale of these commodities. J. P. Lewis' late-nineteenth-century description of beach seining at migrant *wāḍiyas* along the northeastern coast is worth quoting in full:

We have spoken of the Negombo fishermen as an enterprising class. The fact is borne out by official records, which tell of long journeys undertaken by these men in pursuit of their calling. One distant centre favoured by them is Mullaitivu, on the extreme northeast coast. A party of from 400 to 500 men annually resort to this part, where, with other fishermen, mainly from Pesalai, in Mannar, they conduct extensive operations. The men are organised in gangs of from twenty-five to fifty, each under a chief fisherman (*Mudalali*). Each Mudalali brings about ten men with him and employs about the same number of Mullaitivu men. They encamp at various places along the coast. Some of them purchase land near their temporary encampments and plant it with coconuts, but these plantations are not so successful as they might be, as they suffer much from neglect during the part of the year when the fishermen are away in their own districts. The boats used are generally their own, but some are hired. They are chiefly large *ballams* about 40 ft. long, and *pathai* boats (flat-bottomed boats of a rectangular shape and about 12 ft. long). The crew of a *ballam* is six or seven men. The nets used by the visitors are a large drag-net, a small drag-net, and two drift-nets. The fish caught are salted and dried, each Mudalali buying about 100 or 150 cwt. of salt for the purpose. When fully cured the goods are sent to Colombo by a native sailing craft, to be sold by the fishermen's Negombo partners. One-third of the profits goes to the principal who advances the money, and two-thirds to the fishermen, any loss in the

[69] Ice production on a small scale began with the establishment of the Colombo Ice Company in 1866 (Ceylon Cold Stores, *Ceylon in Our Times 1894 to 1969*, Colombo Apothecaries Co., 1969, pp. 71ff).

trade, which is rare, being shared between the Mudalali and the fishermen in the same proportion as the profit. It is supposed to be a profitable investment, the capital invested each year yielding 150 per cent. interest. It is only rarely that there is any loss in the trade.[70]

This account also indicates that there could be substantial profits in the trade. Paul Alexander agrees that this must have been so at beach seine sites where there was no surfeit of *mādāl*.[71] Indeed, his historical information on Gahavälla indicates that beach seine nets were only introduced into that village around 1880, that beach seining quickly established itself as a much more prestigious form of fishing than either deep sea or inshore fishing, and that it introduced economic differentiation within the fishing community. Significantly, in the period from 1895 to 1905 there was a sudden upsurge of uxorilocal (*binna*) marriages in the village, most of them involving daughters of beach seine fishermen. These fishing families disdained marriage links with fishing families from the Gahavälla hamlet of Kottetawa and the neighbouring village of Kudavällakäle, whose primary occupation was deep sea or inshore fishing.[72] During the twentieth century a tiny minority of successful beach seining families 'began large trading enterprises, trading dried fish in the Southern Province interior and exporting coconut and coconut products to Galle'. By the second quarter of the twentieth century these trading families gained economic and political ascendancy at Gahavälla and displaced the landowning Karāva families, with roots in a contiguous village in the interior, who had functioned as the village elite since the mid-nineteenth century.[73]

In conclusion, then, it is my argument that the organisational structure of beach seine fishing and its tendency to generate a class of capitalist *mādāl* owners and *mudalālis* provided a reservoir of individuals with the capacity and the capital resources for entrepreneurial ventures in other fields

[70] From *T. Cent. Imp.*, 1907, p. 633; and J. P. Lewis, *Manual of the Vanni Districts*, Colombo: Govt Printer, 1895.

[71] Personal communication from Dr Paul Alexander. See also Alexander, 1977, p. 247.

[72] Alexander, 1973, pp. 23–5, 39–40, 54–5. This status distinction was rationalised in the argument that the beach seine fishermen caught their fish alive, unlike the deep sea and inshore line fishermen – another illustration of the pervasive influence of Buddhist values and the concern it created.

[73] *Ibid.*, pp. 38, 62–7; and 1977, pp. 242–6.

once such economic opportunities turned up. In other words, the *wāḍiya mudalalis* and *mādäl* owners of Portuguese, Dutch and early British times were the prototypes of Karāva merchants and businessmen in British times. This sort of translocation in economic activity was encouraged by the high levels of risk associated with the fishing industry. It was also encouraged by the low status attached to fishing in Sinhalese society. In continuation of long-standing trends, even today successful fishermen do not want their children to become fishermen. Trading ventures and, where feasible, investments in land and the *walauwa hāmi* life-style have been the avenues favoured by ambitious fishermen.[74]

Besides Alexander's village-level data, at least three nineteenth-century examples of this transition from *mādäl* owner to merchant prince can be provided. First: Hettiyakandagē Joseph Fernando, or Josi Aiyya Rendrāla, a successful big-time arrack renter in the latter half of the nineteenth century, is reputed to have been engaged in *mādäl* fishing at Moratuwa during the early part of his career.[75] Second: family folklore credits the family of Ponnahännädigē Dona Gimara de Silva and her four brothers with the ownership of 'a fleet of fishing boats' at Magalle in the environs of Galle. Among their major activities was that of beach seine fishing. Dona Gimara married Christopher Perera Abeyewardena (1796–?), the only son of 'a man of learning and education' named Emmanuel who was a protégé of Dutch officials. One infers that the Perera Abeyewardenas themselves had 'seafaring' interests – probably fishing but possibly coastal trading. As the port of Galle rose in importance and became the calling point for P & O liners and other ships, Christopher Perera Abeyewardena put his familial resources, experiences and connections to good use. He became a ships' chandler, a *dubash*. 'He obtained a cargo contract with the P & O Steamship Co., bought a fleet of boats, employed a number of hands and established a business that lasted many years and brought him and his sons much wealth.' His many sons were nurtured in this business and one, Simon Perera Abeyewardena (*c.* 1832–91), added a 'salvaging busi-

[74] Alexander, 1973, pp. 38, 40, 72.
[75] My interview with Mrs Ula de Fonseka, née Fernando, 28 Dec. 1973; and *T. Cent. Imp.*, 1907, pp. 511–12.

ness' to these entrepreneurial activities and went on to become a wealthy plantation and property owner. He bolstered these gains with strategic marriages for his sons and daughters, some with affluent families in Colombo and Moratuwa.[76] Third: Don Bastian de Silva Jayasuriya Goonewardene was another owner of *mādäl* at Magalle who is reputed to have prospered initially in his trading activities in the early nineteenth century and even controlled several *dhonies* or ships which traded with Burma. He used these Burmese connections to establish prestigious exchanges with the Burmese kingdom for the Saddharmayuktika sub-fraternity, a branch of the Amarapura Nikaya which he himself supported lavishly. While the wheel of commercial fortune and the loss of some ships at sea brought setbacks subsequently, he had already achieved prominence and been appointed a *mudaliyar* in the 1840s. His new residence at Magalle was known as 'Wasala Walauwa' and his status was raised to that of a *Mudaliyar* of the Governor's Gate in 1868. Two of his daughters, Justina and Nona Baba Hāminē, married into the aristocratic de Fonseka family of Kalutara, while his wife was from the Gardiyē Punchihewagē clan and had marriage links with Karāva families which achieved elite status in the Southern Province in British times, among them the Sudurukku Jayawickremas.[77]

These three stories, I should add, relate to Karāva families. They suggest further embellishments to our general thesis. In the first place, they confirm the importance of a waterfront location for the seizing of certain economic opportunities. Magalle, for instance, is well situated for the task of revictualling and unloading ships at the port of Galle. Secondly, it is significant that Don Bastian de Silva Jayasuriya Goonewardene and the Ponnahännädigē de Silvas had a number of fishing boats, besides *mādäl*. It is arguable that deep sea fishing also generated a capitalist class and that this class of boat owners provided another pool of entrepreneurs who moved into

76 Reminiscences of the Perera Abeyewardenas of Galle as related in the form of children's folk tales by Mrs F. B. de Mel (typescript and MSS. with Miss Rohini de Mel). Also bio-data gathered by myself.

77 Magallē Piyatissa thero, *Saddharmayuktika Bhikkshu Vamsaya*, Colombo: Mahajana Press, 1946, pp. 24–37; personal communications from Messrs Peter Jayasuriya, Sunil Goonewardene and Prof. Bruce Kapferer; and notes in the Bell MSS. at the Colombo Museum (under 'Navandannō' – a gross error!).

other lines of economic activity.[78] Thus, note that in the 1860s one Dombegaha Pattirigē Dawith Pieris from the village of Desaster near Kalutara, who had been the owner of two boats for at least ten years and 'employed' (his words) four men in each boat, described himself as a 'distiller, trader and fisher'.[79] Finally, it will be only too obvious that there was a natural connection between the fishing industry and water transport and, thereby, between fishing and trade. It will be recalled that water transport was by far the easiest means of porterage in pre-British times and that the traffic along the island coast and on its inland waterways was of considerable importance. As boat owners and boatbuilders it was to be expected that the Karāva would fulfil an important role in this carrying trade. Indeed, we have seen that their *rājakāriya* duties included this sort of activity.[80]

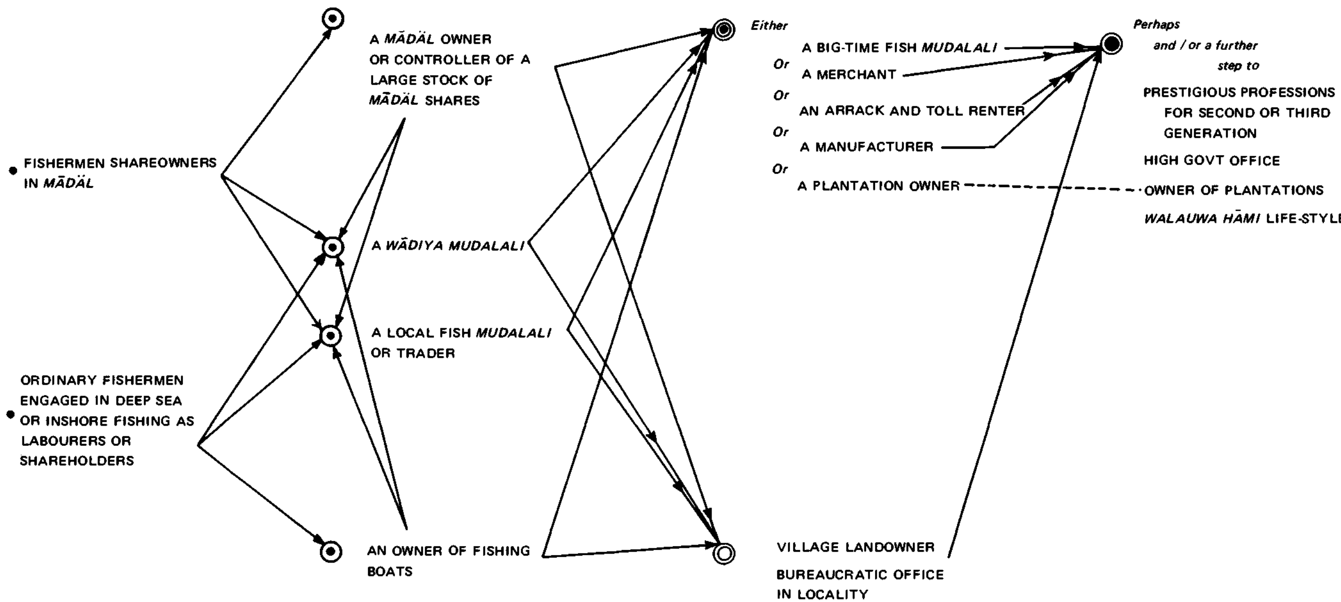
Therefore, in the light of this evidence, one can chart a series of career patterns that were pursued by upwardly mobile fishermen (see fig. 3). These must be seen as lines of advance which were open to various permutations and oscillations. It need hardly be emphasised that such successes were only open to a small number of fishermen.

In summarising this lengthy sub-section, then, it is postulated that the heavy involvement of the Karāva in the fishing industry assisted the emergence of a number of capitalists and entrepreneurs in four interlinked ways: (i) fishing involved participation in an exchange economy and its occupational culture was marked by an individualistic and capitalist ethos; (ii) migrant and economic venturesomeness was regularly reinforced by the need to migrate seasonally; (iii) there was a pronounced tendency for class differentiation to crystallise within fishing villages and for an economic elite of boat owners and *mādäl* owners to emerge; their organisational experience, capital resources and structurally rooted inclinations encouraged these men to transfer their energies into other fields of

[78] Professor Bruce Kapferer has pressed this argument upon me and conjectures that such fishermen were more likely to move to other spheres of entrepreneurship than beach seine net owners. This question remains open. But it is not insignificant that in the vicinity of Gahavälla, till the advent of the mechanised fishing boats in the 1960s, beach seining was relatively more lucrative and that class polarisation was much more pronounced among the beach seine fishermen (Alexander, 1973).

[79] W. D. Wright *et. al.*, 1868, p. 25; see n. 59, p. 253.

[80] See above, p. 53.



3 Flow chart: likely career patterns of upwardly mobile fishermen in the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries

economic activity whenever possible and made them well fitted to undertake this translocation with success during the capitalist transformation in British times; and (iv) the possession of dugout canoes, fishing boats and boatbuilding skills led the Karāva fisherfolk towards involvement in the waterborne carrying trade in pre-British times, either through voluntary choice or by government fiat.

It is not contended that all fishermen were able to effect such social advances. For this reason, the third and fourth of these factors assume greater importance. At this point of the argument, however, the comparative mode of analysis might be turned back against itself. On this reckoning, most fishing communities in Asia and elsewhere should have produced outstanding entrepreneurs. So our argument must be hedged with the proviso that these factors were not always sufficient in themselves; they needed support from other factors. These were provided by the institutional transformation in the British period and have been clarified elsewhere in this book.

The occupational culture of the artisanate and the social advances of the Karāva. One such supporting factor, and a crucial element in its own right, was the occupational culture of the artisanate. This factor worked to the advantage of the Karāva. Indeed, in some cases it appears to have been the stepping-stone which took successful fisherfolk on towards the solid banks of elite status as opulent merchants or men of learning in the prestigious arena of the genteel professions.

In a previous chapter it has been observed that artisan activities were among the tasks to which the Portuguese and Dutch channelled the *rājakāriya* of the Karāva. By the mid-eighteenth century, a Dutch governor could report that 'a large number of carpenters' were found within the Karāva caste.[81] As recorded in early-nineteenth-century reports, in many districts the services of some segments of the Karāva had become fixed, as that of carpentry. Thus, in Galle District they were employed as 'sea servants', caulkers, carpenters and sawyers. In Kalutara District one segment was 'employed as carpenters on the Government works when required', another segment

[81] *Memoir of Loten, 1757*, 1935, p. 29.

was 'bound to repair the Government vessels and boats', and the sawyers were bound to saw Government timber. At Moratuwa and Panadura they were not only assigned to repair schools and resthouses, but some Karāva were 'bound to work by turn in the ship and House Carpenters shops and in that of the coachmakers and also at Hulfsdorp [in Colombo]'.[82] Since the Karāva fishermen had long experience in woodwork in connection with boatbuilding and some families had specialised in the work of *oruva* construction, it is hardly surprising that the Portuguese and the Dutch used these skills for their own purposes, especially in shipbuilding and house construction. Under the Dutch these skills were finely honed and in certain localities carpenters skilled in the work of producing furniture, the fine specimens of 'Dutch furniture' which are the prize of antique collectors today,[83] came into existence. The longstanding association of the Karāva with carpentry work, arising from the occupation of fishing as well as their *rājakāriya* under the colonial powers, is reflected in the host of *gē* names[84] which incorporate the term 'vadu' (*wadu*), which means 'woodworker'. Thus, *vadugē* and *vadumēstrigē* are among the most common dozen or so Karāva *gē* names, while such variants as *uttamavadugē*, *mahavadugē*, *balapavadugē* are also found.[85]

The artisan–craftsman background of several Karāva carries considerable significance. The artisanate was one of the functional groups which figured significantly in the development of capitalism within medieval and modern Europe.[86] In the early seventeenth century the Parsees in Bombay were 'engaged in supplying timber and water to anchored ships and in various handicrafts like carpentry, shipbuilding, weaving, brewing and perfumery'. From these foundations, several Parsee families moved into commerce and thereafter emerged as capitalist shipbuilders and large-scale merchants during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[87] In Ghana in the twentieth century 'the travelling craftsmen of Akwapim, such as

[82] RCS in 1818 in CO 54/71; Memoir of Da Costa on the Colombo Disawany, in CO 54/124; and above, p. 53.

[83] See R. L. Brohier, *Furniture of the Dutch Period in Ceylon*, Colombo: National Museums of Ceylon, [1970].

[84] *Gē* refers to the genitive 'of'.

[85] See Raghavan, 1961, chap. 5.

[86] Landes, 1966, pp. 10–11; and C. H. Wilson in *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, vol. IV, 1967, pp. 488–90.

[87] Guha, 1970a, pp. 1933–4.

carpenters, who journeyed widely in West Africa' were among those who pushed forward the frontiers of cocoa-farming as capitalist farmers in Akwapim District as well as in the neighbouring district of Akim Abuakwa to which they migrated.[88] It would not be stretching a point to extend these analogies and to argue that the Karāva artisans revealed similar motivation for achievement and ideas of capital accumulation, backed by a spirit of enterprise and workaday industry. In contrast to agricultural operations, which, in the Low-Country and wet zone, afford seasonal periods of leisure, artisan occupations generally necessitate labour throughout the year. It can be supposed that they gave rise to more industrious habits.

These occupations in the colonial era also encouraged the processes of monetisation and capital accumulation. Only in some instances did the services of the Karāva artisans in Dutch times, which have been described above, rest on the possession of hereditary service lands. For the most part, they were paid.[89] Over and above these governmental payments, the artisans of the eighteenth century would have had opportunities of making some money through private enterprise in house construction and the supply of furniture, carts, coaches and palanquins. Dutch officials, Dutch Burgher settlers, the headmen (of all castes) and Moor and Colombo Chetty merchants would have served as their principal consumer market. This market, it will be only too clear, would have been largely concentrated around Colombo, Galle, Kalutara, Matara, Negombo and other little towns-in-embryo.

Over and above their influence on socio-economic behaviour, therefore, it is probable that the artisan trades provided certain Karāva families with a foundation of liquid capital for their economic take-off through investment in more lucrative fields (such as arrack farms, timber contracts, cash crop smallholdings or small plantations, or trading establishments) in British times. In the eighteenth century, as in British times, it is to be suspected that their modest earnings were primarily directed towards that great goal: a rise in status. This meant the acquisition of land. Nevertheless, in the capitalist milieu of British times, such lands also served as collateral for credit.

[88] Hill, 1970, p. 23.

[89] RCS in 1818, in CO 54/71.

And coconut, cinnamon and coffee holdings could bring profits as well as status. In this way, the modest levels of capital garnered through craftwork in Dutch times must have served as the primary capital for commercial and plantation capitalism in the nineteenth century. The stock of capital necessary for the initiation of many such enterprises, after all, was not enormous. To bid for an arrack or toll rent, for instance, one needed only an initial deposit of one-tenth of the amount contracted and surety (in the form of property or jewellery) for one-third of this value (this was later made one-half); so that the monthly returns could, it was hoped, meet the subsequent payments.[90] Again, surface deposits of graphite were often worked through joint-stock methods, or alternatively through a system of promissory payments for labour involving a lump-sum wage payment before the Sinhalese New Year – in effect, a daily victualling bill and a yearly wage bill.[91] In this way, fledgling capitalists in the graphite industry bridged their early and difficult days.

As the plantation economy developed and urbanisation proceeded in the nineteenth century, the money-making opportunities for artisans expanded greatly. From the 1820s, as we emphasised earlier, many Low-Country Sinhalese penetrated the Kandyan districts as participants in the service trades and as labourers. Among them were artisans catering to the house-building and other demands of the planters. As a coffee planter explained in writing home: 'there are the Kandyans . . . then there is a race of stronger men between Colombo and Galle of a darker colour. All the tradesmen such as carpenters who go about the estates are of these men.'[92] Indeed their activities seem to have attracted the attention of several contemporary observers, among them the Rev. Spence Hardy whose classic statement will be presented a few pages hence. From the late 1840s, moreoever, coffee was exported in barrels. Barrels were also used for the export of graphite and coconut oil in the

[90] Peebles, 1973, pp. 177ff.

[91] Casinader, 1974b, pp. 3, 11–12; Stewart, 1881; and my interviews with Mr R. H. de Mel.

[92] James Taylor MSS., letter from Taylor to his father, 23 June 1852. See D. M. Forrest, *A Hundred Years of Ceylon Tea 1867–1967*, London: Chatto and Windus, 1967.

second half of the nineteenth century.[93] The massive increase in the number of carts, the demand for barrels and the demand for railway sleepers and telegraph poles from the 1850s: all these developments could only have brought grist to the artisanate mill. In consequence, the coopering industry, sawmills and the building trade grew into important light industries in British times.

Illustrative support for this argument is provided by examples of a few carpenters who extended their commercial operations and became merchant princes and property owners. One was known in his early days as Mututantrigē Sinnappu Baas, the latter term being a Sinhala derivation from the Dutch for 'boss' and refers in the Sri Lankan context to a carpenter, overseer or foreman – and quite often to a working craftsman who owns or runs a small establishment. By the 1860s, Mututantrigē Simon Fernando Sri Chandrasekera, as he was known subsequently, ran a coopering establishment which was known as the Moratuwa Portable Saw Mills and was located at Horetudawe on the Panadura side of the present bridge at Moratuwa. By that stage, too, he was a government contractor, a producer and trader in graphite and an occasional dabbler in arrack rents. One can see how his coopering work, his contracting deals (assuming that these involved timber supplies) and his mining of graphite neatly complemented each other. They compounded his profits as well. He was second only to C. H. de Soysa in the purchase of Crown land in the latter part of the century, supported the Buddhist revitalisation movement with enthusiasm and received a *mudaliyar*ship in recognition of his other acts of public philanthropy. One of his daughters married the veterinary surgeon, W. A. de Silva, while others married John Jacob Cooray, Dr C. P. de Fonseka, Mahawadugē Cornelis Perera (arrack renter and plantation owner) and Danister Perera Abeyewardena (plantation owner). James Fernando, his son (b. 1868), was a substantial property owner (houses and plantations) in the 1900s and continued his father's interest in the graphite industry – claiming the control of from 4–5 groups of graphite mines

93 *Monthly Examiner*, Apr. 1847, p. 313; Tennent, 1859, vol. 2, pp. 143–4; and 'The Ceylon plumbago industry' in the *Ceylon Observer*, 12 Aug. 1880.

and a workforce of about 1,000, besides a large number of small pits.[94]

Another successful baas was Merennegē Arnolis Fernando (1850–1913) from Moratuwa, the second son of M. Juanis Fernando and Sellaperumagē Angela Fernando. Apparently emerging from humble origins, he was known initially as Kathonis Appu Baas, while his elder brother was Hendrick Fernando Baas (1848–1907) and a younger brother was Cornelis Fernando Baas (1855–1926). He is said to have received 'instruction in all the different departments of planting' under one Hendrick Cooray of Panadura in Rayigam Korale, but his familiar name suggests that he was a carpenter or carpenter foreman of some sort. These skills would have been of particular relevance to the extension of graphite mines. Insofar as the date of his marriage to Wanacuwattewadugē Angela Fernando is the same as the year in which he is supposed to have commenced his graphite business, the year 1886, there is an indication that he may have been assisted in some ways by a prospering graphite trading family of the 1880s – the Wannacuwattewadugē Fernandos,[95] also of Moratuwa. By 1907, in the family's own estimation, M. A. Fernando was 'the largest and most influential plumbago merchant'. His graphite interests included the Pusshena mine in the Western Province (the deepest mine – 450 ft – of the day), shares in the Arukgammana group of mines in Kegalle District, the Medagoda group in the same area, the Panangala mine in Kalutara District and shares in the Kurunduwatte group in the Southern Province. He also had urban property and it is claimed that he held the plantations known as Wewagedara, Kiribaththudawe, Pitipana and Panalowa, amounting to 1,325 acres and mostly under coconut, with some cinnamon and rubber. One daughter was married to Jacob Abraham Fernando and, about the year 1910, another was married to G. K. W. Perera (1884–1956), a university scholar, Cambridge graduate and barrister. His sons, J. A. Fernando, Sen. and (Sir) E. P. A. Fernando, succeeded to his business and

[94] *T. Cent. Imp.*, 1907, p. 609; Ferguson's *Ceylon Directory for 1866–68*, p. 674, and subsequent years; and Peebles, 1973, pp. 255, 258, 262; information communicated by the late Shanti Sri Chandrasekera; and Dharmabandu, 1962, pp. 205–6.

[95] Regarding the successes of this family in the late nineteenth century, see A. M. Ferguson, 1885, and *T. Cent. Imp.*, 1907, pp. 616–18.

were able to consolidate their holdings at Bogala in the Arukgammana locality, veins which have proved the richest and most long-lasting graphite deposits in Sri Lanka.[96]

M. A. Fernando and Simon Fernando Sri Chandrasekera perhaps represent unique cases of rapid social advance from artisans to wealthy Sinhalese notables. It is probable that in most instances the contribution of an artisan background was much less spectacular: that it normally initiated a more sedate and gradual line of progress, and one that could lead families into the liberal professions as well as the world of business. The Balapawadugē Mendis family of Dehiwala provides an illustration. Balapawadugē Joseph Mendis (1818–1900) was born in Moratuwa and developed into a master carpenter. As a young man he was able to buy an acre of land in the village of Dehiwala in 1843 for Rs. 500 (about £50 then) and he settled down in this village in 1844 on marrying the daughter of a 'contractor' from Magalle who had moved to Colombo, 'being contractor to the household of the Chief Justice'. His son, B. Anthony Mendis (1844–1906) became a Methodist minister after a spell as an employee in a mercantile firm at Kandy. Among the latter's sons were Lionel A. Mendis (publicist), J. Vincent Mendis (teacher, public worker) and Dr G. C. Mendis (university lecturer and historian).[97]

In these diverse ways, therefore, the occupational culture of the artisans provided the foundation for the social progress of several Karāva at various times in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It also provided a useful bridge for ambitious fisherfolk and builders of fishing boats. This bridging function is neatly and sharply encapsulated in the ecological lay-out and the history of the pseudonymous village of Karāvälla, described as it stood in the early 1950s by Bryce Ryan. Karāvälla had been a separate fishing hamlet on the coast but had been gradually encompassed by 'a small coastal city' and has become one of its wards. Ryan's conscious pre-

[96] The information in this paragraph is derived from *T. Cent. Imp.*, 1907, pp. 606–7, 657; M. Anthony Fernando, 1936, pp. 1–2; my interviews with Mr Joyce A. Fernando; and Casinader's unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Sri Lanka, Peradeniya. Quotations from *T. Cent. Imp.*

[97] J. Vincent Mendis, 1968, pp. 7, 10–11; and my conversations with the late Dr G. C. Mendis.

sentation of a historical process through ethnographic description is best conveyed in his own words, and in extensive quotation:

That Karavella was, a few generations ago, little more than a fishing settlement there is no doubt, but today only one-fourth of its households depend directly or indirectly (e.g. fish vendors, etc.) on the sea. On the other hand, half of the family heads are skilled craftsmen, practically all carpenters, and a fifth are white collar, business and professional people. This transformation is recent. Although only a fourth of the household heads today are fishermen, three-fifths had fathers who were fishermen. The gradual movement from the sea is evident in the present occupational layers. Nearly nine-tenths of the fishermen had fishermen fathers; two-thirds of the craftsmen, and not one of the topmost class, came from fishing homes. The movement from the sea upward on the social ladder had occurred among the elite of Karavella, but it is several generations old. The present craftsmen are in that social stratum mid-way in the rise to white collar status.

All members of each occupational layer are of the same caste, and nearly all trace their origins to the village's original fishing folk. The unfolding generations have brought along with occupational change a threefold class structure apparent in ecological patterns and social interaction. Ecologically Karavella is a village of layers. Three almost clearly defined strata run parallel to the sea, reflecting and symbolizing the growth of urban class differences. Along the beach are to be found only the poverty-stricken cadjan huts of actual fishing folk. Their inland neighbors are predominantly skilled craftsmen living in more commodious cadjan huts or in mud-walled and thatched roof structures. Still more distant from the sea, and close to a main thoroughfare, are the well-kept tile roof houses of the small shopkeepers, net owners and white collar workers.

Kinship in the village knows no ecological boundaries. Those of the tile roofs freely admit their bonds with the fishermen, but in daily interaction the two live in separate worlds. Between carpenters and fisher folk the distinctions are less pronounced, and not a few of the fishermen's sons are apprenticed to brothers or cousins who have left the sea. Although the first line of friendly daily intercourse is with those of like occupation, the two groups have much of the village world in common. More distinct are the social lines between craftsmen and those of the white collar, for this is a boundary between the world of 'peasants' and that of urbanites. Its barriers are symbolized by trousers and shoes and English education. The topmost class has life within itself and with like persons in the nearby town. Their contacts with the fishing folk are casual although, in times of hard-

ship, charitable. Significant evidence of the class hierarchy is to be observed in the tendency of each level to marry within itself. Eighty-five per cent of the fishermen had married the daughters of fishermen. In contrast, not one of the 'white collar' class had married a fisherman's daughter, and only 27 per cent of the craftsmen's wives were from fishing families.

At all levels in village economy caste consciousness is found. Intercaste marriage is as widely repudiated as in the interior peasant villages of the Low-Country, although less violently so. No case of actual intercaste marriage in Karavella could be found. The village rich have not repudiated their own; quite to the contrary, several of them are well known as champions of programs for aid to fishermen. The poor are envious of the rich relations, but find in them living evidence that the caste blood has what it takes to make good. Only in so far as the 'upper class' man has been drawn into an intercaste world has *caste* solidarity diminished, and little of this touches affairs of family and home.[98]

It is not difficult to identify Karāvälla as one of the fishing hamlets within Moratuwa. Moratuwa once again: that collection of discrete eighteenth-century villages (Moratuvälla, Kōralavälla, Laksapitiya, Ēgoda Uyana, Idama, Rawatawatta, Willorawatta and others), which came to be grouped together and identified as Moratuwa. The recurrent appearance of this place-name in this monograph stems from the number of families and individuals from this locality among the Sinhalese elites of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Within the Karāva elite the Moratuwa Karāva were a prominent, even dominant, segment. For instance, among the eighteen Karāva landowners who spent over Rs. 10,000 in the purchase of Crown land in the period from 1860–89 according to the computations worked out by Patrick Peebles, eleven were from Moratuwa, three from Panadura (including Mututantrigē Simon Fernando Sri Chandrasekera who was on the border), two from Kalutara and the natal origins of two are not known (one was a Mututantrigē). Again, of the eighty-nine Karāva identified within the pages of Wright's *Twentieth Century Impressions*, fifty, or 56.2 per cent of the total Karāva complement, had their immediate patrilineal origins in Moratuwa, while a few others had matrilineal links with the locality. Of the twenty-three Karāva among the Sinhalese rich in Colombo

[98] Ryan, 1953, pp. 268–9.

who were taxed in 1915, at least sixteen had patrilineal origins in Moratuwa, and held 83 per cent of the assets attributed to these twenty-three (table 14). These are all rough indicators of the predominance of the Moratuwa Karāva. Perhaps the closest approximation to their share of wealth and power within the Karāva can be derived from a similar disaggregation of the data on the principal Karāva plantation owners in 1927: at least thirty-three of the seventy-four Karāva holdings (that is, 44.6 per cent) were owned by persons with patrilineal connections with Moratuwa, though several were resident in Colombo. If one took marriage links into account in all these broad statistical comparisons, a good many more of the Karāva notables would have had some strong ties with Moratuwa. The Moratuwa elite were not inbred. Indeed, these marriage links and their wealth enabled them to generalise their role as spokesmen for the Karāva community. We have seen before how several Karāva protest movements were led by Moratuwa Karāva.

It is time to take up the last of our series of controlled comparisons and to locate any distinguishing features in the Moratuwa locality and among the Moratuwa Karāva which might explain how they achieved such prominence among the Karāva, and in this way discern general factors in the processes of social mobility within Sri Lanka during the period under study.

Karāva : Moratuwa Karāva – factors favouring the Moratuwa Karāva

One factor weighted towards the Moratuwa Karāva has been anticipated: the occupational culture of artisans. It is true that the Karāva in a number of localities were assigned to artisan *rājakāriya*, but those in the Moratuwa locality appear to have become specialists in this field. And large numbers appear to have taken to the craftsman's trade by the early nineteenth century. To cite Christoffel de Saram's report in 1818: 'those [Karāva] of Morotoo and Pantura, as most of them are carpenters, are bound to work by turn in the ship and house carpenter's shops'.[99] This is partially contradicted at source, by

[99] RCS in 1818 in CO 54/71, fol. 95.

some petitioners from Moratuwa in 1829: 'The population at our village is more than 7,000, a few of whom follow the trade of fishing for six months, a few that of carpentry, and all the rest earn their subsistence by means of extracting toddy and dealing in arrack.'[100] Because the petition is related to toddy tapping, it is possible that some exaggeration crept in. In the light of these contradictions, the precise degree to which Moratuwa relied on carpentry cannot be indicated. The truth probably lies in – between these statements. But there can be no doubt about one point: the expertise of the Moratuwa craftsmen in furniture production. This expertise seems to date from the seventeenth century at the very least[101] and their renown was well established by the mid-nineteenth century. In 1864 Spence Hardy wrote:

There is scarcely an estate in the island that has not contributed to the wealth of Morotoo, as the men of the village have been employed to build the dwellings, stores, and lines of the planters, and a great part of the furniture has been made by the same hands. I have not been able to learn at what time and by what means, they became so famous as carpenters. Great numbers are employed as coopers, in the making of barrels for the shipment of coffee. The profits of arrack farms have been greater, but more questionable, sources of revenue, and much wealth has been gained by farming tolls and ferries.[102]

One cannot but think that Moratuwa's location on the coastal side of the Bolgoda–Panadura lake-and-river complex was of some consequence in the decisions of the Portuguese or Dutch regimes when they located some of their carpentry, coachmaking and cartwright shops at this spot: for logs could be easily floated down the waterways from the forested hinterland of Rayigam and Hewagam Korales (see map 7). But this sort of ecological advantage was also shared by places like Mutwal, Panadura, Kalutara and Alutgama – every one of which was a port in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in contrast to Moratuwa. In Portuguese times some colonial workshops seem to have been located at these villages as well, besides other places such as Maggona.[103]

100 Moratuwa Petition, 1829.

101 Personal communication from Dr V. Kanapathypillai.

102 1864, p. 192. Also see John Ferguson, 1903, p. cxlvi, and Malalgoda, 1976, p. 127; and cf. Hill, 1970, p. 23.

103 See above, pp. 81–2, and C. R. de Silva, 1975, pp. 103–5, 111, 115.

Artisan experience, then, was an important factor in the social advances of Moratuwa Karāva families through the behavioural habits it nurtured as well as the capital it generated during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

In the eighteenth century and the early decades of the nineteenth century the Moratuwa Karāva also derived capital from the distilling of arrack and toddy, and from their trading activities. The limited body of information that has been brought to light to date on the trading network during late Dutch times was incorporated in chapter four. What needs emphasis here is the degree to which the illustrations of Sinhalese participation in the carrying trade stemmed from the Moratuwa locality. Indeed, the evidence regarding ownership of *dhonies* and Karāva participation in 'the coasting trade and the commercial intercourse with India' was specific to people from Moratuwa.[104]

These references to the coastways trade should not be permitted to obscure the importance of the inland trade with the Kandyan Kingdom and the hinterland of the Maritime Provinces, particularly the carrying of salt, dry fish, textiles and arrack in return for arecanut, peasant coffee, paddy and other commodities. Patrick Peebles suggests that this trade may even have been of greater importance for the Moratuwa Karāva. He quotes a British district officer in 1802: 'A most destructive traffic has been carried on from Morottoo, Pantura, and other distilling villages, by carrying large quantities of arrack into the Country, and exchanging it for Paddy and other raw produce.'[105]

It should be reiterated that the carrying trade was not restricted to the Karāva from Moratuwa, nor even to the Karāva. The Moors were the leading traders in the early nineteenth century and the centuries preceding. But the evidence available to us indicates that the Karāva were far more active in this trade than other Sinhalese and that some of the Moratuwa Karāva were prominent participants.

So, too, with distilling: many villages in the coastal zone appear to have participated in the production of arrack and toddy. Here, it is difficult to credit Moratuwa with a singular

[104] See above pp. 86, 88. [105] 1973, pp. 170–1.

level of prominence. In British times, the production of arrack was subject to numerous regulations. The minimum size of the stills was stipulated. Arrack could only be distilled under license in certain regions – generally speaking, within the Western and Southern Provinces. In the early nineteenth century, as indicated previously, the licensed production of arrack was restricted to the area south of Colombo; and from 1826 to the coastal belt south of Panadura.[106] Insofar as this regulation was effectively enforced and remained operative in the nineteenth century, Moratuwa may have faced an economic setback as a result. But the significant point for our purposes is the fact that arrack distilling provided an important source of income for the locality in Dutch times. Whatever the setbacks arising from the 1826 regulation, there were, by then, many avenues to wealth. The previous gains from arrack and toddy distilling provided the Moratuwa families with some of the primary capital for ventures in these avenues (while continuing to assist the coastal villages to the south).

One of the ways to gain wealth, as we have seen in chapter five, was that of arrack and toll renting. The dominance of the Karāva in this field was the dominance of the Moratuwa Karāva. However, during the early decades of the twentieth century, several Karāva renters from Panadura, led by the Ponnahännädigē Dias families, P. C. H. Dias, the Salgadoes and the Mahawadugē Pereras, began to 'muscle in' on the ascendancy of the Moratuwa arrack renters. And the eight large arrack distilleries, which were established in the 1920s following a change in government policy, belonged mostly to Karāva from localities other than Moratuwa: namely Mahawadugē Cornelis Perera (Diyalagoda Distillery), Dr M. G. Perera of Beruwala (Wawulagala Distillery), Francis Isaac B. W. K. Fernando (Beruwala Distillery), Mahamarakkalagē Elaris Cooray of Wadduwa (Mestiya Distillery), Michael Gunaratne (Sri Lanka Distillery), Philip de Mel of Paiyagala (Paiyagala Distillery), J. B. M. Perera of Kalutara (Rockland Distillery) and a partnership between P. A. Cooray and one Wickremasinghe (a Goyigama) which controlled the Anvil Distillery.[107]

[106] Colvin R. de Silva, 1962, pp. 465–6.

[107] Data from my interviews with Mr Sena Jayasuriya (early 1975 and Jan. 1977) whose

The preponderance of Moratuwa Karāva among the nineteenth-century arrack and toll renters was obviously an outgrowth from the contextual transformations associated with British rule, and a product of orientations and resources within the Moratuwa locality which had their roots in previous centuries. In this sense, it was a symptom of their success, not a cause. Nevertheless, this achievement in turn helped to sustain the momentum of social mobility during the course of the nineteenth century and provided monetary resources and networks which supported further advances. Biographical data relating to a number of Karāva notables from Moratuwa (and Panadura) reveal that their investments in Crown land and plantation property were preceded by periods in which they were arrack renters.

Other factors, the one attitudinal and the other ecological, have been suggested by Patrick Peebles as contributory influences towards the social mobility of the Moratuwa Karāva.

> Its access to the *entrepot* of Colombo was easy, unlike the communities to the east and north of the city, which were separated by the Kelani Ganga. Traders from Moratuwa traveled both inland to Kandy and across the water to South India. It could be argued that the development of Moratuwa was fortuitous, that it received cultural influences and a demand for its goods and services from exogenous sources that no other locality in the island did. Such an explanation would need to make a systematic comparison of all the administrative centres of the island, especially Galle, Batticaloa, and Jaffna . . .
>
> [Moratuwa's] leaders appear to have been more outwardly-oriented than other Ceylonese . . . Moratuwa also had a strong tradition of continuous trade and migration between their villages and South India . . . Many of the leading Moratuwa families of a later date trace their ancestries to an Indian mercenary or trader. These suggest that interaction and intermarriage with non-Sinhalese groups may have prevented rigidification of local social relationships. Emigrants provided new values and an upwardly mobile population.[108]

The emphasis on an outward orientation is similar to my arguments relating to the wedge marginality and the flexibility of the Karāva community as a whole. It is doubtful whether this factor can be treated as a feature that was exclusive to the

mother was a daughter of Henry Isaac Fernando. The Beruwala Distillery continues to function today (1979) under Mr Sena Jayasuriya's direction.

[108] 1973, pp. 167–8, 172.

Moratuwa Karāva. Again, my previous observations would suggest that only limited importance could be attached to the advantages arising from Moratuwa's geographical location. Certainly, its situation twelve miles to the south of Colombo across flat country gave it ready access to the capital city; and this was compounded in Dutch times by a canal connection (see map 7). But the Kelani Ganga could not have been the barrier that Peebles has taken it to be.[109] The coastal areas to the north of this river were also linked to the capital by Dutch canals. And previously, in the early sixteenth century, the village of Mutwal at the mouth of the Kelani Ganga had been a major entrepot and junction, till the river was blocked (by a sandbar?) and its importance declined.[110] As Peebles observes by way of a qualification attached to his argument, a more systematic analysis of the ecological conditions and transport facilities in Colombo and its environs during the Dutch and early British periods is called for before we can essay definitive verdicts on the comparative advantages of coastal sites in its vicinity both to the north and to the south.

Whatever the reasons, Moratuwa men were among the Low-Countrymen who penetrated the Kandyan highlands as merchants and contractors in the wake of the British conquest: B. M. Selestinu Mendis, David Mendis-Jayewardena, Weerahännädigē Alexander Fernando, the Lindamulagē de Silvas and the de Soysas to cite a few examples. Along with the Moors, these early entrepreneurs must have secured vantage points and pre-empted certain areas of economic activity. In the light of the economic diversification, the centripetal marriage patterns and the caste-oriented recruitment and sub-contracting practices which have been described in previous chapters, such gains must have invariably multiplied themselves in a cumulative fashion. In this connection the enormous fortune acquired by Jeronis and Susew de Soysa during the space of about three or four decades proved a great asset for the Karāva in general and for the Moratuwa Karāva in particular. This fortune was the opposite of the banyan tree under which nothing else

[109] This revises my previous acceptance of Peebles' contention in Roberts (ed.), 1979, p. 202.

[110] C. R. de Silva, 1975, p. 115. For some pertinent information, see Brohier, 1947, pp. 37–43; and Mottau, 1947, pp. 55–67.

flourished. It spewed seeds of mobility around it. It brought social distinction and caste pride to the Karāva. It meant political connections of some value.

Beyond the Moratuwa Karāva

The Karāva merchant princes and plantation owners also established spatially wide-ranging marriage connections. These linked the local notables in such southern centres as Matara, Mirissa, Ahangama and Galle, and those Karāva merchants in the new outposts of the diaspora in the Kandyan territories, to notables residing along the western seaboard at Kalutara, Panadura, Moratuwa and Colombo. These marriage networks, in their turn, helped the Karāva community to cohere together and diminished the influence of the internal differentiation into *pēruva* (see chapter three) which the organisation of *rājakāriya* was beginning to foster. In effect, this meant that two processes moving in opposite directions coexisted paradigmatically within the Karāva caste. On the one hand, as I have observed, the remarkable growth of a Karāva elite involved a widening of the economic chasm between rich and poor, at least from an etic ('outside') point of view. On the other, the 'traditional' lines of intracaste stratification associated with the *rājakāriya* system of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries ebbed away. This weakening process was evident in the readiness with which the Karāva *mudaliyar* families of the early nineteenth century linked arms in marriage with the *nouveaux riches* during the course of the century. The de Fonsekas of Kalutara, the Lowes and de Rowels, the Mendis Jayewardenas of Moratuwa and the Fernandos of Colombo did not hesitate very long in accepting the newcomers, as some of their marriages from the mid-nineteenth century will testify.[111] This was in marked contrast to the 'first class Goyigama' in the Low-Country. They disdained such links with the Goyigama *arrivistes*, the 'nobodies who were trying to become somebodies'.[112] The Bandaranaike v. Senanayake clash which reflects and symbolises this rift has continued to the present

[111] Peebles, 1973, p. 301; and *T. Cent. Imp.*, 1907, pp. 537, 548–9, 740–2, 745–6, 810.
[112] Ceylon *Hansard*, L.C., 11 Aug. 1915, p. 406 (Sir S. C. Obeyesekere); and Labrooy, 1973, p. 278. See Peebles, 1973, pp. 172–3.

day, even if a paradoxical reversal of public styles occurred. Again, while the four-tiered intracaste gradations among the Salāgama died out, this was only achieved as part of a process which consolidated a two-tier system dividing the *hēvāpanna* Salāgama from the *kuruňdukāra* Salāgama.

The spiralism in the social mobility of the Karāva elite during the British period is only too evident in the manner in which the growing wealth of the Karāva not only compounded itself, but also bolstered these ramparts with another attribute and determinant of status: Western education. The merchant princes and plantation owners sponsored schools in their natal areas. They sent their talented children, or even prospective sons-in-law, to India and England for tertiary training. And these literati served as their spokesmen and propagandists, and assisted the bourgeoisie in the organisation of voluntary associations of all types. The political instrumentality of a Western education in the eyes of the Karāva is illustrated strikingly in the manner in which one caste-conscious Karāva writer eagerly appraised the scholastic talents of James Pieris and the two Fernando brothers.[113]

More than any other community, moreover, we have it on R. H. de Mel's authority that the Karāva placed an emphasis on the education of women.[114] On this point, it could be said that they even outpaced the Ceylon Tamils, whose avidity for education was constrained by a social conservatism which restrained investments in the education of women. In Moratuwa Lady Brownrigg is credited with having given 'impetus . . . to female education', because she built 'a neat little school house for the exclusive instruction of the girls of the place' in 1816. Inevitably, it was associated with a church and came to be referred to as 'Nonagē Palliye' and had one Colombagē Simona Fernando as its first schoolteacher.[115] It is not certain that this institution survived for long and one could profit from more detailed information on the spread of female education within Moratuwa and elsewhere. However, I have little doubt about the validity of R. H. de Mel's contention. The gist of Jeronis Pieris' letters, the ability of two of C. H. de Soysa's daughters to produce a Sinhalese book entitled

[113] See above, p. 165. [114] My interview with Mr R. H. de Mel (Jan. 1977).
[115] Holy Emmanuel Church, 1935, pp. 3–4.

Muvakavdusivilkatāva saha Gajasivilkatāva,[116] and the establishment of the Princess of Wales College in the 1870s lend supporting evidence. The only question that remains is whether this early attention to female education was peculiar to the Moratuwa Karāva or more widespread among the Karāva. I would support the latter view. But here, too, it is instructive that Moratuwa appears to have been in the vanguard.

The wider implications of this condition must necessarily be speculative. These implications rest on the crucial role of women in the socialisation process. The presence of a significant minority of educated women among the Karāva in the nineteenth century would have been of material assistance in the diffusion of vernacular and English education and must have encouraged the drive for achievement in the use of the formal educational process. There is simply no doubt that the Karāva community has nourished a large number of teachers, doctors, Christian ministers, lawyers, surveyors and other professionally qualified persons during the last century and a half. A few have been outstanding personalities. Among the earliest Sinhalese who received university scholarships in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were several Karāva.[117] These achievements have been continued up to the present day. In keeping with the general island pattern, too, Karāva women have been among those who have taken up the employment opportunities associated with secondary and tertiary education. Even in the Karāva fishing village of Gahavälla on the southern coast, Paul Alexander found that the girls were 'overrepresented in the upper levels of the education system'.[118]

Among the Karāva, moreover, women have participated in economic activity and managerial roles to a pronounced degree. To begin with contemporary anthropological observations: it will be recalled that the womenfolk are the sellers of fish at the village of Wellagoda. This is not so at Gahavälla, for the division of labour is strict and every aspect of fishing is a male activity. Nevertheless, Paul Alexander found that the women

[116] Published by *Mudaliyar* Romanis Pieris Warnakulasuriya Goonewardena, n.d. (1880s?). Copy with Mr L. S. D. Pieris of the Hatton National Bank.

[117] E.g. James Pieris, H. Marcus Fernando, G. K. W. Perera, L. M. D. de Silva, P. de S. Kularatne and V. M. Fernando.

[118] 1973, p. 23.

'play a very large part in the management of resources'. They handle virtually all credit operations. Indeed, the eight moneylenders in the village are all women. So, too, are the four organisers of *siṭṭuva* (revolving credit associations).[119] This is not uncommon among Karāva womenfolk elsewhere on the southwestern coast. Several women also have controlling rights in soaking pits for coconut husks, which are such a common phenomenon in the Southern Province. While the involvement of women in such economic activities is by no means peculiar to the Karāva, it is likely to be more prevalent among them because of the migration of Karāva traders and fishermen. In several instances their wives must perforce take on managerial functions in maintaining properties, or in earning a supplementary income. Amongst trading families, as we saw from Kapferer's writings, they might even become important in the familial enterprise. These entrepreneurial roles could hardly be a twentieth-century innovation. It has been shown that the Karāva were involved in migrant fishing activity from pre-British times and that they also engaged in trading ventures at considerable distances from their natal and residential villages during the nineteenth century, if not earlier. In an era in which communications were not as advanced as they are today, the Karāva womenfolk would have been required to take to entrepreneurial economic activity to an even greater degree.

Such a cultural emphasis highlights a broad similarity between the Karāva and the Javanese, Atjehnese and Minangkabau of Indonesia and the Ibo of Nigeria. In analysing these latter four communities, Nancy Tanner has revealed how 'women are relatively equal participants in the economic and ritual realms' and how the role of the mother in each kinship system is not only 'culturally and effectively central', but also 'structurally central'; that is, 'the mother has some degree of control over the kin unit's economic resources and is critically involved in kin-related decision-making processes'. It is not insignificant that the Atjehnese, Minangkabau and Ibo men are heavily engaged in migrant labouring, or trading, employment; and that these three communities have sustained a noticeable degree of social mobility within the states of which

[119] *Ibid.*, pp. 31–3.

they are part. Nor is it insignificant that all these matrifocal communities are associated with 'the socialization of men and women with strong achievement motivation and entrepreneurial orientation'.[120]

In this sense, in seeking contributory reasons for the economic achievements of the Karāva, it is surely no cliché to say: 'it began in the womb'. What is more, the participation of numerous Karāva women in managerial and entrepreneurial roles adds strength to the thesis that a pooling process, associated with occupational diversification and with networks of economic exchange and sub-contracting arrangements which retained profits within the caste boundary, served as a major factor in the growth of a Karāva elite.

[120] 1974, esp. pp. 130–1, 152.

9
Concluding remarks

In employing a series of controlled comparisons in the previous chapter, it was necessary to consider several factors to which, eventually, little weight could be attached as contributory causes for the economic success of the Karāva elite. Without altogether jettisoning the eclectic approach which has been favoured so far, in this chapter I propose to sharpen my lines of discriminatory emphasis and to distinguish the more vital factors, and thereafter to dwell upon some of the implications arising from these factors. Assigning weightages in this fashion is ultimately intuitive. This is all the more so when, as the previous sections should have made clear, some of the reasoning is constructed upon speculative foundations. The assessment must also operate within the constraints of a research design which has focused on channels of upward social mobility. For a fuller understanding of the processes of elite formation it would be useful to have similar information on families that experienced downward mobility. *A priori* it is possible that the advent of the Western colonial powers or the penetration of capitalism may have had depressive effects on certain sectors of the indigenous economy. The emergence of a new economic elite in a locality may have been rendered possible by the decline of certain local elites who were adversely affected by such processes. It is without the benefits of such finely grained local and regional histories that this concluding survey is attempted.

In Portuguese times during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries the Karāva caste benefited substantially from the fact that a large number had accepted Catholicism, and from the related fact that its womenfolk had married Portuguese men to a greater degree than the women of

other castes. This brought economic privileges and certain status attributes which were not entirely lost under the Dutch. Throughout the period under review the Karāva also profited from their residential concentration within the coastal low-lands of the Maritime Provinces. These localities have been a natural habitat for the coconut tree and derived considerable economic benefits from its profusion and from the expansion of the area under coconut in colonial times, especially during the British period. Moreover, these were precisely the localities which were subject to the greatest social and economic ferment during the period of Western domination. In common with the other Low-Country Sinhalese, the Karāva caste was subject to the influence of commercialisation, monetisation and Westernisation over a long period of time. In the result, to adopt a Euro-centric angle of vision, they were 'quickened into vigorous life by contact with Western influences'.[1] That is, they adapted themselves and developed the necessary qualities of business acumen and opportunism to survive and to succeed in the world of social change.

These advantages of ecological location were not exclusive to the Karāva, or even to the KSD castes. However, it is possible that the heavier concentrations of Karāva along the water's edge may have provided them with some economic advantages. There can be little doubt that the possession of boats by Karāva fishermen enabled some of them to turn to the waterborne carrying trade with relative ease and to become pedlars and merchants. Their heavy involvement in the fishing industry assisted the Karāva in yet other ways and emerges as a distinctive causal factor in the growth of a Karāva elite. In particular, the fishing industry tended to spawn a small class of capitalist boat owners, owners of expensive beach seine nets and big-time fish merchants and financiers. Beach seining in the past could also generate capital. This corpus of successful fishermen and fish merchants provided a reservoir of entrepreneurs and merchants for capitalist investment in other fields.

The shift of investment from the fishing industry into other

[1] Ponnambalam Arunachalam in *Census of Ceylon 1901*, Colombo: Govt. Printer, 1902, vol. 1, p. 198, referring to 'the daring seamen of the coast, and other castes' who had been influenced by 'new ideals and forces' and encouraged thereby to 'contest the precedence of the Vellala'.

arenas was a natural preference in the light of its high levels of risk and the demeaning status attached to the occupation. In other words, it was induced by the subordinate caste status of the Karāva caste and their structurally marginal situation in the Sinhalese polity – a situation which has been conceptualised as that of 'wedge marginality' and which the Karāva shared with the Durāva and Salāgama castes. Wedge marginality was a product of their recent immigrant origins, the secularised forms of their principal service occupations, their limited involvement in wet paddy cultivation and the nature of their relationship with the dominant Goyigama caste – a caste which functioned as the hub around which Sinhalese society turned. Wedge marginality involved the KSD castes in the dialectical pressures of integrative and separative forces – which must be read as two-way processes that did not depend on the actions of the KSD castes alone. If the Portuguese had continued to rule the Maritime Provinces and if the majority of Karāva had remained Catholics, it is possible that the centrifugal tendency may have gained ascendancy. As it was, the process of integration and assimilation into Sinhalese society assumed the upper hand in the eighteenth and subsequent centuries. In consequence, the centrifugal imperative made itself felt in attempts among the KSD castes to maintain their autonomy and to deny their subordination to the Goyigama. But this very denial implied that the Goyigama served as an apical reference point and an integrative standard for the KSD castes as well. Eventually, the KSD caste elites even attempted to displace the Goyigama by proclaiming their primacy within the Sinhalese caste hierarchy. In challenging the Goyigama and attempting to overcome the disabilities and stigmata inherited from the past, their rhetoric was sometimes couched in the language of egalitarianism. But their economic power was such that these ideals were subsumed by a drive towards dominance and towards a new system of stratification where they would gain the highest stratum.

Wedge marginality was of considerable consequence for the economic achievements of the KSD caste elites. In association with their ecological location and the influence of Westernisation, it paved the way for exogenous influences on a scale that probably was not shared by other castes in the Low-Country.

The K S D people were not completely entwined within the traditional agrarian economy and the *divel–tovil* exchanges centred upon the Goyigama caste. They were more flexible in their attitudes and less constrained in taking to new occupations in either the manufacturing trades or in the distribution of commodities. Over the years this produced a considerable degree of occupational diversification among the K S D castes. This feature, one suspects, was most pronounced among the Karāva caste because the cinnamon-peeling duties of the Salāgama were too vital for the colonial powers for them to permit the Salāgama sufficient free time to pursue these other avenues to the full, because of the migrant venturesomeness of the Karāva, and because the pressures of migratory occupations among Karāva traders and fishermen encouraged their womenfolk to engage in productive economic enterprises on their own account. Such occupational diversification proved to be a source of considerable strength. It compounded the centripetal tendency in marriage patterns which the Karāva shared with other Sinhalese, and which directed marriage choices towards kinfolk and maintained caste endogamy without the use of caste *panchayats*. Where there were spread effects from the economic gains or the upward mobility of individual Karāva families, these were channelled along kin and caste networks. In other words, a pooling process came into operation. Once some economic breakthrough was achieved, a process of economic spiralism could result because of this pooling process, and because the Karāva elite showed a marked preference for their caste fellows in their recruitment policies and retained a strong interest in their natal villages even after they had secured economic footholds elsewhere.

To emphasise the importance of such a structural factor in the emergence of a Karāva elite is to emphasise a group situation. This is not uncommon in the writings on South Asia because of the prominence of such business communities as the Parsees, Marwaris, Memons and Chettiyars. Yet it is also true that in the literature on entrepreneurship there is a general tendency to focus on Schumpeterian individuals, on aggressive risk-takers and rational investors. Weber's focus on Calvinists was not based on their group linkages. His emphasis was on the influence of the Calvinist ethic on individuals; and he speci-

fically directed attention towards the intense isolation of the pious Calvinist and the imperatives towards individual striving for salvation and a work ethic that was generated by this situation.[2] Though in many ways a gross misreading of Weberian theory which fails to place Weber's writings on the subject within its historical and comparative framework, the more recent theories on the influence of 'need achievement' and psychological factors elaborate an individualistic approach.[3]

A study which emphasises the importance of group activity has been that of Clifford Geertz on the aristocratic entrepreneurs of Tabanan in the island of Bali. In this locality, the traditional social organisation was marked by a set of overlapping and intersecting corporate associations known as *seka*, which gave the Balinese village a 'strongly collective and yet a peculiarly complex and flexible pattern' and which supported the political dominance of an aristocracy. In the post-1945 era the penetration of state agencies and other exogenous forces led to the political decline of the aristocracy. Whereupon, these families moved into successful entrepreneurial activity in the emerging modern economy. In doing so these men mobilised and adapted kin-group loyalties and *seka* obligations in an innovative fashion. They drew upon a cultural tradition which provided them with 'ready made forms for collective activity of a specialized sort'. Geertz describes the case-histories of several firm-type enterprises which manipulated 'traditional *seka*-type horizontal ties and . . . vertical horizontal ties in the interest of modern economic ends'.[4] While these details vary considerably from those pertaining to the story of the Karāva, in focusing on the social structure, the group situation of the Tabanan aristocracy as a class and the importance of existing networks of specialisation and cooperation, Geertz's analysis bears similarity to that part of my study which emphasises the impor-

[2] Weber, 1965. See also Tambiah, 1973, pp. 1–3; Birnbaum, 1953; and Warner, 1970. These comments must be qualified by attention to his companion piece on 'The Protestant Sects and the Spirit of Capitalism' (1948, pp. 302–22), where the linkages established through the voluntary association constituted by a religious sect are shown to have assisted business activity.

[3] E.g. David C. McClelland, *The Achieving Society*, Princeton University Press, 1961: E. E. Hagen, *On the Theory of Social Change*, London: Tavistock, 1962; and K. William Kapp, *Hindu Culture, Economic Development and Economic Planning in India*, New York: Asia Publishing House, 1963.

[4] 1963, pp. 82–141.

tance of wedge marginality, occupational diversity and the pooling effect of caste-based economic networks in the economic successes of the Karāva elite. Both studies present a striking contrast to the general run of entrepreneurial studies which concern themselves with the motivations and the situations of individuals.

Among the trades which were taken up by the Karāva in pre-British times were those of arrack and toddy distilling, the farming of government rents, the artisan trades, the provision of building material, rope and coconut-oil production, trading in arrack, dried fish and other products and the carrying trade, both over land and on water. In some localities – Moratuwa is a notable example – artisan activity provided a bridging device in the social mobility of ordinary fishermen. Several of these occupations also generated the primary capital for the burgeoning economic opportunities in the nineteenth century. Insofar as the first half of the nineteenth century was a crucial turning-point in the island's economic history, it was of significance for the future of the Karāva caste that a segment of the caste had the capacity to invest in these expanding opportunities. In doing so these pioneers secured strategic points and pre-empted useful economic arenas for themselves, their associates and successors – mostly men from their own caste. Spiralism was perpetuated yet further. While these early-nineteenth-century gains were built upon the factors that have been outlined earlier, in turn they contributed substantially to the growth of a Karāva elite and, incidentally, provided many of the examples detailed in this book. If secondary in sequence, the securing of economic vantage points and near-monopolies during the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century must count as a major factor in the evolution of a Karāva elite, because it was the British period which brought the island within the domain of the capitalist mode of production.

These gains in their turn accentuated the discordance between the economic power of the Karāva elite and the social status they were accorded, both within the caste hierarchy and the new prestige system that was evolving under the British. Such status inconsistency was not acceptable to the Karāva elite. They stretched out aggressively in efforts to raise their status and prestige. They did so in mixed vein: at times adopt-

ing the standard that had been created by their arch-enemies, the Goyigama aristocracy, and favouring the life-style of the *walauwa hāmi*; and at other times taking their cue from the British gentry. Many members of the Karāva elite also invested effort in distributing philanthropic largesse. Such philanthropy emphasised their role as community leaders and legitimated their success. So too did many Karāva Buddhist *arrivistes* adhere to the refurbished Buddhist tradition of a pious Buddhist activist and community leader. Such a life-style not only served as a font of legitimation, but also emphasised the social distance between the elite and the Karāva masses without endangering the elite's leadership role. At the same time, whether intentionally or not, such a life-style supported the integration and assimilation of the Karāva caste into the Sinhalese polity.

Such orientations necessarily impinged upon the economic investments and accumulative goals of the rising Karāva bourgeoisie. In common with other Sinhalese capitalists, the Karāva merchants and plantation owners were 'ambidextrous': maximising their profits with one hand, and maximising their status and power with the other.[5] Such a duality raises the question whether they can be described as 'capitalists'. In the sense of property owners who organise legally free wage earners in enterprises directed towards the goal of pecuniary profit, the answer must be in the affirmative. However, the degree to which this description encompasses all their economic activity remains a moot point. Indeed, in response to the question whether they exemplify the Weberian view of a capitalist as a rational economic agent who consistently and deliberately adjusts economic means to the attainment of pecuniary profit, and whose activities are (as they were in early modern Europe) eventually diffused throughout society in such a way as to subject relations of production and exchange to the dominance of capital, the answer must lean towards the negative. There is room to surmise that the development of capitalism in British Ceylon was partial and incomplete, and that indigenous capitalist activity was concentrated around merchant capital rather than industrial capital (though the existence of indigenous

[5] Roberts, 1975b, pp. 46–50.

plantations and graphite mines does complicate this suggestion). If valid, this conclusion can in the first instance be attributed to the influence of a dependent colonial economy (what some would describe as a 'colonial mode of production'), but we are in need of studies which demonstrate the mechanisms and processes of such subordination in the Sri Lankan case.[6] In any event, such an explanation does not preclude the influence of other currents rooted in the Sinhalese value-system, the organisational structure of indigenous enterprise or the technical conditions of production. My findings are of tangential relevance here. In answer to the initial question raised above, it could be said that the Karāva capitalist was not the *Homo Economicus* of the West. His economic goals were devoted towards socio-political ends or moderated by such ends. Among those ends were integrative acts of ideological legitimation and the accumulation of status, with the latter in its turn emphasising various forms of social distancing. Linking up with these status goals, too, were two related goals to which considerable significance was attached: the desire to prove their equality with the arrogant colonial overlords, and the desire to prove their superiority to the equally arrogant Goyigama aristocracy. In the power-equation of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the latter was a more practical objective – the more so because the British presence provided manipulative leeway in support of this goal. 'Smashing the favoured Goyigama class' became a major aim of the Karāva elite. Western education and economic strength were considered instrumental to this end. For these reasons the sons of merchant princes were encouraged to move into the genteel professions, and the talented Karāva youth with a tertiary educational training in England were regarded as the potential spearhead of the attack on the Goyigama.[7]

The weightage placed on such socio-political goals[8] by the

[6] S. B. D. de Silva's projected publication will fill this gap. For 'the colonial mode of production', see Hamza Alavi, 'India and the Colonial Mode of Production', *Socialist Register*, 1975: 160–97; and the debate involving J. Banerjee, Utsa Patnaik and Ranjit Sau in the *Economic and Political Weekly*, 1975 and 1976.

[7] See above, pp. 165, 279.

[8] A similar political orientation is embodied in the myths, beliefs and rituals associated with the Sinhalese New Year among the Rajaka, Wahumpura and other non-Goyigama castes. According to a recent interpretation these contemporary 'myths, rites and

Karāva elite reflects the significance of socio-structural factors in the story of the Karāva, namely the importance of their wedge marginality and their caste solidarity in a social setting in which caste was a principle of social organisation. The wedge marginality of the Karāva carried transformative power. It contributed substantially towards the economic achievements of a Karāva elite. And as these gains underlined the lack of congruence between the socio-political status and the wealth of this elite, the transformative potential of Karāva wedge marginality crystallised itself yet further. Besides their open and violent attacks on the alleged caste superiority of the Goyigama caste, perhaps the most significant of the transformative actions undertaken by the Karāva elite were their efforts to reform the headman system during the twentieth century and their leadership in the constitutional reform movement in the 1900s (1900–9). However, the call for constitutional reform in the 1900s was predicated upon a devolution of power to the Ceylonese and upon a Legislative Council with representatives elected on the basis of a limited franchise defined by educational and property qualifications. The gradual extension of these franchise qualifications in the 1920s and the Donoughmore Commission's decision to grant universal adult franchise (effective in 1931) must have upset the calculations of the Karāva elite. Numbers in politics favoured the Goyigama. One suspects that the strong support which the SamaSamajist movement attracted in the coastal lowlands from the 1930s[9] derived *in part* from this reversal in Karāva fortunes and the need to channel their energies in new directions. Such Karāva plantation owners and men of property as Wilmot A. Perera

observances . . . form a logically structured complex' which expresses 'a political and social ideology . . . the yearning for social equality, the model of an egalitarian political system . . .' (Sunimal Fernando, 1977). Drawing upon the examples of the KSD castes and the French bourgeoisie during and after the French Revolution, it can be suggested that such egalitarian ideals remain means towards an end (the overturn of subordination, degradation and weakness) rather than ends in themselves.

[9] See Wriggins, 1960, pp. 134–5; and Robert N. Kearney, 'The Ceylon Communist Party' in Robert A. Scalapino (ed.), *The Communist Revolution in Asia*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1965, pp. 379–80. Also see Y. Ranjith Amarasinghe, Trotskyism in Ceylon: A Study in the Development, Ideology and Political Role of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party, 1935–1964, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation in Political Science, University of London; and V. K. Jayawardena. 1971.

and Harold Peiris of Alfred House were among the financial supporters and fellow-travellers of the SamaSamajist movement in the 1930s and 1940s; and Leslie and Cholmondley Goonewardene, Meryl Fernando, Dr Hector Fernando, P. H. William de Silva and Santiago Fernando were among the Western-educated leaders of the LSSP during the party's first two decades.

In view of their strong base in capitalist activity it is hardly surprising that ambivalences shadowed the commitment to socialism shown by a segment of the Karāva elite. In Sinhala Buddhist nationalism, however, the Karāva Buddhists found channels of expression in the 1950s which enabled them to participate in the overturn of the United National Party, then the Goyigama party *par excellence*,[10] and to take on important leadership roles – as exemplified in the persons of L. H. Mettananda, P. de S. Kularatne, N. Q. Dias, P. H. William de Silva and F. R. Jayasuriya. Inevitably this emphasis created a rift between the Buddhist and the Christian Karāva. In the meantime the radical socialist rhetoric of these decades found fertile ground among the generation of Karāva Buddhist youth from 'lower middle class' and *petit bourgeois* backgrounds. During the economic depression of the 1960s the frustration of their ambitions induced several of them to join hands with youth from many other castes, including such depressed castes as the Batgama and Wahumpura, in a radical nativist movement – that of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna – in which young

[10] Though the leader of the SLFP and the MEP coalition, S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, was from the Goyigama caste, he appears to have been free of caste prejudices (my interviews with Sir Senarat Gunewardene) and, in any event, had grasped the importance of building up support among the KSD and other non-Goyigama castes – several of whom were disaffected by the partialities of the UNP (note the caste composition of Sir John Kotelawela's cabinet). As a member of the Goyigama aristocracy of old, moreover, Bandaranaike was influenced by their traditional rivalry with the Goyigama *arrivistes* and with the Senanayake–Kotelawela families in particular. In this regard the political strategies of the Bandaranaike family and a segment of the Goyigama aristocracy during the last four decades call to mind Karl Marx's penetrating analysis of the Whig aristocracy in England in his article in the *New York Daily Tribune* of 21 Aug. 1852, under the title 'Tories and Whigs' (see Karl Marx: *Surveys from Exile*, ed. by David Ferbach, London: Allen Lane, 1973, vol. 2, pp. 256–60). For a study which attempts to establish the significance of caste lobbies in Sri Lankan politics, see Janice Jiggins, *Caste and Family in the Politics of the Sinhalese, 1947–1971*, Cambridge University Press, 1979.

Karāva men provided a significant leadership component.[11] These ambivalences and variations in the political courses favoured by the Karāva political activists during the post-1931 era reflect both the island's fragmented social structure as well as the opportunistic activities of individuals and factions, the partial penetration of new political ideologies, the coalitional fluidity and the electoral capriciousness which have been such marked features of Sri Lankan politics in recent decades.

[11] Robert N. Kearney and Janice Jiggins, 'The Ceylon Insurrection of 1971', *The Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, Mar. 1975, vol. XIII:1, pp. 44–5; and Obeyesekere, 1974, p. 372. Obeyesekere places undue reliance on the validity of the official statistics on the rank-and-file detainees, and therefore overestimates the Goyigama involvement in this movement. However, one cannot deny that the Goyigama youth participated in this insurrection to a substantial degree.

Tables

Explanatory preface relating to tables with plantation statistics

These are extracted from a series collected for the years 1871–2, 1880–1, 1890–1, 1907, 1917 and 1927, for the most part from Ferguson's *Ceylon Directories*. A fuller explanation is provided in appendix 1. It can be noted here that a number was allotted for the vertical columns, each of which presents the statistics for a particular crop, as follows:

col. 5	Coffee	col. 10	Cinnamon
col. 6	Cinchona	col. 11	Citronella
col. 7	Tea	col. 12	Cocoa
col. 8	Rubber	col. 13	Other products
col. 9	Coconut		

Some of these crops (e.g. coffee and cinchona) were only cultivated for a limited period and were virtually eliminated from the island scene. Others were late introductions. Yet others were minor crops found only in a few areas.

The tables in this book are extracted from this broader series of data. In certain years, therefore, some of the columns will be missing. In some instances it was not considered meaningful for the minor crops to be indicated and these columns have been amalgamated under 'Other Products'. Such an amalgamation is indicated by the column number reading '10–13'.

Table 1. *Regional distribution of the population in Sri Lanka: 1824*

	Numbers				Percentages				
Districts	Total above puberty	Total males	Total females	Total population	Total above puberty	Total males	Total females	Low-Country districts	Whole island
Chilaw	17,370	15,534	14,306	29,840	7.5	7.3	7.7	7.5	—
Colombo	119,854	115,018	100,342	215,360	52.0	53.8	54.1	54.0	—
Galle	45,077	39,666	34,886	74,552	19.5	18.5	18.8	18.7	—
Tangalle	48,504	43,680	35,976	79,656	21.0	20.4	19.4	20.0	—
Total Low-Country districts*	230,805	213,898	185,510	399,408	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	= 46.9
Malabar districts**	119,112	102,161	93,536	195,697					23.0
Kandyan Provinces in 1821				256,835					30.1
Sri Lanka in early 1820s			=	851,940					100.0

Source: *Return of the Population of the Island of Ceylon compiled from the separate returns of the Collectors of Districts to the Commissioners of Revenue; in pursuance of an order of Government bearing date 27th January, 1824*, Colombo: Nicholas Bergmann, Government Press, 1827. There is no explanatory report. It is not clear how the data was collected, when precisely and over what period. The figures for the Kandyan Provinces are found on page 149 and are given on a district-wide basis as well; it is indicated that this set of figures relates to the year 1821.

Percentages: These have been rounded off.

*Only about 352,635 were Sinhalese. The rest were Europeans, Burghers, Chetties, Malays, 'Malabars', 'Parava', 'Vanias', etc.

**Not all were Ceylon Tamils (or 'Malabars' as they were called).

Table 2. *Caste composition of the Sinhalese population in the Maritime Provinces in 1814*

			Numerical Distribution							
			1a	1b	1	2	3a	3b	3	4
	Caste name as in census	Clarification	Colombo	Caltura	COLOMBO	GALLE	Matura	Hambantota	TANGALLE	TOTAL without Chilaw
1	Velalles	Goyigama	68,837	22,292	91,129	25,330	32,313	524	32,837	149,296
2	Fishers	Karāva	15,649	9,107	24,756	11,328	5,245	200	5,445	41,529
3	Chalias	Salāgama	2,492	5,639	8,131	11,737	1,235	—	1,235	21,103
4	Chandoes	Durāva	6,231	1,476	7,707	2,434	4,973	69	5,042	15,183
5	Smiths[a]	Navandanna	3,230	1,804	6,034	1,609	1,702	—	1,702	8,345
6	Washers	Rajaka	4,269	1,204	5,473	1,441	2,186	530	2,716	9,630
7	Jagereroos[b]	Wahumpura	4,408	1,666	6,074	1,647	1,564	—	1,564	9,285
8	Paduas[c]	Baṭgama	4,176	22	4,198	27	3	—	3	4,228
9	Tom-tom beaters[d]	Beravā	941	877	1,818	490	1,751	—	1,751	4,059
10	Potters	Badahäla	1,207	—	1,207	354	551	—	551	2,112
11	Hinaves	Hinnā	88	1,462	1,550	153	1,516	—	1,516	3,219
12	Chunam Burners	Hunu	1,191	413	1,604	468	434	—	434	2,506
13	Barbers	Ambättayō	349	78	427	146	118	—	118	691
14	Olias	Oli	—	247	247	360	534	—	534	1,141
15	Others		76	333	409	909	81	—	81	1,399
	TOTAL		113,144	46,620	159,764	58,433	54,206	1,323	55,529	273,726

Table 2. *Caste composition of the Sinhalese population in the Maritime Provinces in 1814*

	Caste name as in census	Clarification	1a Colombo	1b Caltura	1 COLOMBO	2 GALLE	3a Matura	3b Hambantota	3 TANGALLE	4 TOTAL without Chilaw
			Percentages							
1	Velalles	Goyigama	60.8	47.8	57.0	43.3	59.6	39.6	59.1	54.5
2	Fishers	Karāva	13.8	19.5	15.4	19.3	9.6	15.1	9.8	15.2
3	Chalias	Salāgama	2.2	12.1	5.0	20.0	2.2	—	2.2	7.7
4	Chandoes	Durāva	5.5	3.2	4.8	4.1	9.1	5.2	9.0	5.5
5a	*Gold & Silversmiths*		*2.4*	*3.4*	*2.7*	*2.6*	*3.1*	—	*3.0*	*2.8*
5b	*Blacksmiths*		*0.3*	*0.4*	*0.3*	*0.1*	—	—	—	*0.2*
5	Smiths	Navandanna	2.8	3.8	3.1	2.7	3.1	—	3.0	3.0
6	Washers	Rajaka	3.7	2.5	3.4	2.4	4.0	40.0	4.8	3.5
7	Jagereroos	Wahumpura	3.8	3.5	3.8	2.8	2.8	—	2.8	3.4
8	Paduas	Batgama	3.6	*	2.6	*	*	—	*	1.5
9	Tom-tom beaters	Beravā	0.8	1.8	1.1	0.8	3.2	—	3.1	1.5
10	Potters	Badahäla	1.0	—	0.7	0.6	1.0	—	0.9	0.8
11	Hinaves	Hinnā	*	3.1	0.9	0.2	2.7	—	2.7	1.2
12	Chunam Burners	Hunu	1.0	0.8	1.0	0.8	0.8	—	0.7	0.9
13	Barbers	Ambättayō	0.3	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2	—	0.2	0.2
14	Olias	Oli	—	0.5	0.1	0.6	0.9	—	0.9	0.4
15	Others		*	0.8	0.2	1.5	0.1	—	0.1	0.5
	TOTAL		100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: *Return of the Population of the Maritime Districts*, Colombo: Nicholas Bergmann, Government Press, 1816, which is available at the Department of

National Archives, Sri Lanka. There is no report attached and it is not clear how the data was collected, precisely when it was collected and the period of time during which the enumeration was done. The order for the census was issued in 1814.

Chilaw: While the population for this district is noted in the census, there is no caste information. The table is set out in a form which will permit comparison with the 1824 census.

Castes: Unlike the population data, the caste data is presented on a district-wide basis, and is mixed with ethnic categories such as Moors, Burghers, Malays, etc.
There seems to be a rough caste ranking scale once one excludes the non-Sinhalese categories, so that the Goyigama are consistently placed first and the 'Potters' (Badahäla) usually come after the Navandanna. But there is no consistency in this pattern between the three districts. In the table above, therefore, the castes have been listed in approximate order of numerical weight.

Others: The following census categories have been included:
Under Colombo (col. 1): Palies, Brassfounders, Ambelangodas, Grasscutters, Pannias, and Woodcutters. (Perhaps the 'Palies' should be treated as Oli.)
Under Galle (col. 2): Kinnerias, Demalagatteras and Tondogatteras.
Under Tangalle (col. 3): Kinnerias and Taylors.
There is some doubt as to whether the Brassfounders, Demalagatteras and Tondogatteras should be treated as Sinhalese.

Notes:
[a]The Navandanna are subdivided in this census into 'Blacksmiths' and 'Gold & Silversmiths'.
[b]Our figures include 8 'Wahanpurayas' (Wahumpura) listed under Colombo (col. 1a).
[c]Our figures include 27 'Yomanso or iron manufacturers' listed under Galle (col. 2). For this term see Ryan, 1953, p. 127.
[d]Under col. 1a the census lists 'Tom-tom beaters' and 'Berowayas' (Beravā) separately. I have combined the two. Under Caltura (Kalutara) one finds 'Berowayas' only. In the other regions one finds 'Tom-tom beaters' only.
*Percentage below 0.1

Table 3. *Caste composition of the Sinhalese population in the Maritime Provinces in 1824*

	Caste name as in census	Clarification	Numerical Distribution: 1 COLOMBO	2 GALLE	3 TANGALLE	4 TOTAL without Chilaw	5 CHILAW	6 TOTAL with Chilaw	Percentages: 1 COLOMBO	2 GALLE	3 TANGALLE	4 TOTAL without Chilaw	5 CHILAW	6 TOTAL with Chilaw
1	Vellales	Goyigama	107,501	28,763	45,769	181,943	9,557	191,500	56.6	41.5	60.0	54.3	54.1	54.3
2	Fishers	Karāva	29,285	13,629	7,451	50,365	4,928	55,293	15.4	19.7	9.7	15.0	27.9	15.7
3	Chalias	Salāgama	10,655	13,095	2,348	26,098	203	26,301	5.6	18.9	3.0	7.7	1.1	7.4
4	Chandoes	Durāva	9,056	2,533	7,280	18,869	786	19,655	4.7	3.6	9.5	5.6	4.4	5.6
5	Smiths	Navandanna	6,115	2,775	3,004	11,894	382	12,276	3.2	4.0	3.9	3.5	2.1	3.5
6	Washers	Rajaka	6,216	1,656	3,316	11,188	839	12,027	3.2	2.4	4.3	3.3	4.7	3.4
7	Jaggerairoos	Wahumpura	6,538	2,012	1,846	10,396	—	10,396	3.4	2.9	2.4	3.1	—	2.9
8	Patchies[a]	Batgama	5,045	—	56	5,101	—	5,101	2.6	—	*	1.5	—	1.4
9	Tom-tom beaters	Beravā	1,974	869	2,646	5,489	—	5,489	1.0	1.2	3.4	1.6	—	1.6
10	Potters	Badahäla	1,897	458	696	3,051	211	3,262	0.9	0.6	0.9	0.9	1.1	0.9
11	Hinnawas	Hinnā	1,543	360	425	2,328	—	2,328	0.8	0.5	0.5	0.6	—	0.7
12	Chunam Burners	Hunu	2,107	827	473	3,407	—	3,407	1.1	1.1	0.6	1.0	—	1.0
13	Barbers	Ambättayō	587	155	263	1,005	252	1,257	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.3	1.4	0.3
14	Olias	Oli	415	608	639	1,662	—	1,662	0.2	0.8	0.8	0.4	—	0.5
15	Others		795	1,336	49	2,180	501	2,681	0.4	1.9	*	0.6	2.8	0.8
	TOTAL		189,729	68,986	76,261	334,976	17,659	352,635[b]	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: *Return of the Population of the Island of Ceylon*, Colombo: Nicholas Bergmann, Government Press, 1827, available at the Department of National Archives, Sri Lanka or from CO 59/29.

Cf: 1824 and 1827: In 1827 Colombo District encompassed the Colombo and Kalutara Districts of 1814 with the exception of 'Barbereen' (which, presumably, was enumerated under Galle District).

Others: This category includes the following:
in Colombo: the census categories Pannease (perhaps Pannayō); Palteas (Paliyō?); Pallereyas (Pallatu); Kinnereyas; and Brassfounders.
in Galle: the census categories Kinnereyas, Demellegattereyas and Tondogattereyas.
in Tangalle: the census categories Kinnereyas, and 'Taylors or Hunnalias'.
in Chilaw: the census category Weavers.

Notes:
[a]The 56 Batgama registered at Tangalle are described as 'Paduas' whereas the label 'Patchies' is used for Colombo. In this connection see Bryce Ryan, 1953, pp. 127–8 and 264.
[b]The total of 352,635 compares closely with that of 352,845 computed by Ryan (*ibid*, p. 264) and that of 351,598 by Ralph Pieris (1956, p. 192). The latter's table has a few minor misprints however. The discrepancy arises from the numerically small groups that are included in col. 15, for it is not certain whether one or two of these should be regarded as Sinhalese.

*Percentage below 0.1.

Table 4. *Regional distribution of each Sinhalese caste in the Maritime Provinces in 1824 (figures are given in percentages)*

	Caste name as in census	Clarification	1 Colombo District	2 Galle District	3 Tangalle District	5 Chilaw District	6 Total
1	Vellales	Goyigama	56.1	15.0	23.9	5.0	100.0
2	Fishers	Karāva	53.0	24.6	13.5	8.9	100.0
3	Chalias	Salāgama	40.5	49.8	8.9	0.8	100.0
4	Chandoes	Durāva	46.0	12.9	37.0	4.0	100.0
5	Smiths	Navandanna	49.0	22.6	24.5	3.1	100.0
6	Washers	Rajaka	51.7	13.8	27.6	7.0	100.0
7	Jaggerairoos	Wahumpura	62.9	19.3	17.7	—	100.0
8	Patchies	Baigama	98.9	—	1.0	—	100.0
9	Tom-tom beaters	Beravā	36.0	15.8	48.2	—	100.0
10	Potters	Badahäla	62.2	14.0	11.1	6.5	100.0
11	Hinnawas	Hinnā	66.3	15.5	18.2	—	100.0
12	Chunam burners	Hunu	61.8	24.3	13.9	—	100.0
13	Barbers	Ambättayō	46.7	12.3	20.9	20.0	100.0
14	Olias	Oli	25.0	26.6	38.4	—	100.0

Source: *Return of the Population of the Island of Ceylon*, Colombo: Nicholas Bergmann, Government Press, 1827.

Colombo District: Extended to the Bentota river and included Kalutara District.

Tangalle District: Included the District of Matara.

Table 5. *Some Sinhalese caste percentages for the whole island*

	1 *1820s* Derivations from British census data		2 *1960s* A guesswork estimate
Goyigama	?		60
Karāva	8.50	probably slight underestimates	10
Salāgama	4.0		7
Wahumpura	?		6
Durāva	3.0		4

Sources:

1 Worked out from the caste data for the Maritime Provinces in the census of 1824 (see table 3) and a total population figure for the Sinhalese which combines the total in that enumeration with that for the Kandyan Provinces in 1821. Thus a crude estimate. The assumption is that at this stage the numbers of Karāva, Salāgama and Durāva in the Kandyan areas were statistically insignificant. This may not stand the test of further research. About the year 1735 a number of cinnamon peelers fled to the Kandyan districts and established two isolated villages (probably in the Seven Korales). In the 1740s it was estimated that there were about 800–1,000 cinnamon peelers (i.e. Salāgama) in the Kandyan Kingdom, and Davy's estimate in the 1810s was some 500 families. See Kotelawele, 1968, pp. 76–7; Koorundu, 1833; and John Davy, 1821, p. 126. Again, in the late eighteenth century, if not earlier, there were at least six Karāva villages in the Four Korales (which = part of the present Kegalle District). See John D'Oyly, 1929, p. 16 and L. S. Dewaraja, 1972, pp. 183–4. Adrian de Abrew Rajapakse (1816–17, p. 532) said that the Salāgama added up to some 'twenty-five thousand souls'. This should be compared with the figure of 19,655 in the 1824 census. Allowing for 2,000 in the Kandyan districts one has a shortfall of 3,500 in the census. This amounts to a 14 per cent shortfall which compares well with the 15 per cent underenumeration that is taken as a statistical probability by N. K. Sarkar (1957, pp. 22 and 23–63).

2 P. V. J. Jayasekera, 1970, p. 36n. Gananath Obeyesekere similarly estimates that the Goyigama constitute about 60 per cent of the Sinhalese population today (1974, p. 17). Ryan's estimate is 50 per cent and I have heard of estimates of 45 per cent or so. Jayasekera's estimate for the Wahumpura seems to be much too low.

Note:

While Ryan enjoins caution in 'drawing current inferences from data over a century and a quarter old', he believes 'their import is substantiated' by his sampling and observations; and concludes 'that the rank numerical order of the castes in 1824 is approximately to be found today' in the Low-Country (1953, p. 163). Cf. Gombrich, 1971, p. 301n.

It is likely that during the last 150 years a number of the numerically small 'lower castes' (Oli, Palī, Hannāli, Hinnā̄, Hunu, etc.) have been able to slip their caste. The movement is likely to have been upwards; *a priori* the most obvious choice and the one likely to provide most cover would be that of Goyigama; but entry into such categories as the Karāva and Salāgama may also have been feasible because of the considerable spatial mobility revealed by these castes. The proliferation of ***patabän-di*** names and the growth in the number of de Silvas, Fernandos and Pereras would have been part of this process.

Table 6. *Plantations controlled by the Warusahännädigē de Soysas: 1870–91 (extent given in acres)*

	1 Number of properties	2 Total extent owned	3 Total extent cultivated	4 Extent uncultivated	5 Coffee	6 Cinchona	7 Tea	9 Coconut	10 Cinnamon	12 & 13 Other products
1870 acc. to E. H. Peterson's Ceylon Almanac for 1870										
C. H. de Soyza	13	4,708	3,608	1,100	1,510	—	—	998	1,100	—
Susew Soyza	13	3,481	3,138	343	1,426	—	—	1,380	332†	—
Total	26	8,189	6,746	1,443	2,936	—	—	2,378	1,432†	—
Ferguson's Ceylon Directories 1871–2										
C. H. de Soysa[a]	21	4,096	2,626	1,470	2,059	—	—	110	457	—
S. (de) Soysa[b]	9	2,656	1,173	1,483	1,173	—	—	—	—	—
C. H. de Soysa and Bastian Fonseka	1	1,003	450	553	450	—	—	—	—	—
Johannes Soyza[c]	1	70	40	30	30	—	—	—	—	—
Total[d]	32	7,825	4,289	3,536	3,722	—	—	110	457	—
1880–1										
C. H. de Soysa	70	25,016	16,796	8,220	6,368	—	—	8,708	1,720	—
S. Soysa[e]	2	160	—	160	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total[f]	72	25,176	16,796	8,380	6,368	—	—	8,708	1,720	—
1890–1										
C. H. de Soysa[g]	70	23,263	12,604	10,659	150	70	915	8,639	2,106	724
C. H. de Soysa and A. Perera	1	400	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	71	23,663	12,604	11,059	150	70	915	8,639	2,106	724

†These figures describe property with coconut and cinnamon interplanted.

Sources:

1 Compilations from Ferguson's *Ceylon Directory* for each year. The initial work was undertaken by Misses Kaleel, de Silva and Siddampalam and the collation and final compilation was done by the author.

2 My compilations from Peterson's *Ceylon Almanac for 1870*.

Notes:

[a]Includes 'Mahagawatte' plantation listed under 'C. de Soyza'.

[b]Some of these plantations are listed under the ownership of 'S. de Soysa' or 'S. Soysa'. Since Susew de Soysa had a brother named Solomon de Soysa, this could also refer to the latter; but that is unlikely.

[c]Though this is listed here, I am by no means certain that it refers to the brother of Jeronis and Susew who was christened 'Johannes'.

[d]The total excludes plantations held by Andiris Soysa, A. and M. Soyza and Harmanis Soysa because it is believed (I am subject to correction here) that these individuals were not siblings of either Jeronis or Susew de Soysa, or of C. H. de Soysa. Harmanis Soysa was a manager who worked under Jeronis de Soysa and became a considerable plantation owner and entrepreneur in his own right. He was also a relative. See Roberts, 1975a, pp. 9n. and 43.

[e]Both plantations are described as 'abandoned'. One has C. H. de Soysa's name under the column 'Manager or Agent'.

[f]Here, too, the total excludes the plantations held by Andiris Soysa (1: 220 acres), A. and M. Soyza (1: 200) and Harmanis Soysa (3: 1883).

[g]In the *Directory*, the two plantations 'Kuruwe' and 'Salawe' are listed twice each in two different places. This is not unusual. However, in both these instances the acreage figures were not the same. The higher figure was arbitrarily selected in each case.

Peterson's Ceylon Almanac:

In the plantation directory for coffee estates, there are two columns of figures namely, 'Total Extent' and 'Cultivated Acreage'. But in that for coconut and cinnamon, there is only one column entitled 'Acreage'. As a matter of convenience, it has been assumed that this represents the cultivated area. This is obviously incorrect. In table 6 above, therefore, columns 9, 10, 13 and 3 must be viewed as inflated figures.

Ferguson's Ceylon Directory:

A similar problem arises with the figures on the coconut and cinnamon plantations in these *Directories*. So the same cautionary note applies. For an elaboration of the problems attached to the statistics in the plantation directories in this series of *Ceylon Directories*, see Roberts, 1975a, p. 91 and appendix 1 below.

Table 7. *Some data on the urban property investments of the Warusahännädigē de Soysas in the early twentieth century*

(a) Official Estimates of the de Soysa Assets in Colombo: Part of the Appraisal provided by the Colombo Municipality regarding Wealthy Sinhalese in 1915 as a preliminary for riot compensation extortions.

1	Estate of C. H. de Soysa	Rs. 1,034,410
7	L. W. A. de Soysa	252,970
22	A. J. R. de Soysa	110,020
25	Dr H. M. Fernando*	105,950
41	Dr Solomon Fernando*	73,150
44	T. H. A. de Soysa	70,590
78	E. L. F. de Soysa	45,740

*Son-in-law of C. H. de Soysa

From DNA, Lanka 76/146. A list of the leading individuals (consisting of 90 of the 452 or so proprietorships noted) is published in Roberts, (ed.), 1977, pp. liii–lvi, and Roberts (ed.), 1979, chap. 4, table 3. The numbers refer to those in the table in the 1977 publication, where the arrangement is in order of assessed value. It is not clear whether the appraisal confined itself to the urban assets of each individual or cast its net wider and took into account all the assets of the rich urban residents. Since the source was the Municipality of Colombo it has been supposed that the appraisal is based on the ownership of urban dwellings. The list pertains to only 5 of Colombo's wards and may be a partial one, though the practice was to amalgamate the information on each individual. Also see table 14 below.

(b) Building Allotments held by the de Soysas in Kandy: 1872, 1891, 1911 and 1927, with Net Annual Rateable Value as recorded by the Municipality.

	1872		1891	
	No.	Value	No.	Value
Charles Soyza*	85	Rs. 20,050	49	Rs. 14,879
Susew Soyza	2	540		
	87	20,590	49	14,879

	1911		1927	
	No.	Value	No.	Value
Lady de Soysa or her heirs	14	3,622	5	7,830
E. L. F. de Soysa	2	1,300	5	608
(J. S.) Walter de Soysa	35	6,010	65	14,872
L. W. A. de Soysa	32	1,652	3	1,870
R. E. S. de Soysa	13	7,800	13	14,018
	96	20,384	91	39,198

*In 1891 the data refers to 'the estate of C. H. de Soysa' (who died in 1890).

This table is based on statistical data gathered from the assessment registers in the Municipality of Kandy by Mrs Shona Roberts, whose work was assisted by the cooperation of the officers at this institution and financed from a research grant from the University of Sri Lanka at Peradeniya. For each year a cut-off figure was employed to locate the more valuable urban holdings and wealthier owners of buildings: Rs. 240 for 1872, Rs. 180 for 1891, Rs. 180 for 1911 and Rs. 300 for 1927. Where the *net annual rateable value* (ie. NARV) reached this sum or above, each entry was noted. At the same

time where it was noticed that the same individual had a number of buildings with lower NARV which added up to this sum, data on these entries was also collected. And once an individual had entered the lists for that year an attempt was made to pick up data on all his holdings. Given the medley of names, this was difficult. There can be little doubt that several holdings below the NARV cut-off figure were not noticed. In this sense, the figures represent the minimum sum of holdings held by each individual.

Other problems were involved in the collation of data because of human error and inconsistencies in the way in which names were noted. It is possible that two individuals with the same name and initials have been linked together under one head. Again, a 'de Silva' or a 'de Soysa' may have been entered in the registers as a 'Silva' or 'Soysa' (or Zoysa). See appendix 1.

(c) Annual Rateable Value of Property owned by the de Soysas in Colombo: 1927.

	No. of assessed units	Net Annual Rateable Value official estimate in Rs.
Estate of C. H. de Soysa	8	72,510
C. J. R. and R. E. S. de Soysa	5	49,550
L. W. A. de Soysa	29	26,145
Mrs E. L. F. de Soysa	1	4,500
R. E. S. de Soysa	2	4,000
Silvester de Soysa	2	1,550
Lady de Zoysa [*sic*]	1	2,803
		161,058

This information was collected from the housing registers for the year 1927 located in the Colombo Municipal Council by Miss Shireen Samanasooriya, working under my direction. The NARV of Rs. 1,000 was used as a convenient demarcating line and all entries in which the NARV was Rs. 1,000 or above were recorded. As with Kandy, however, entries below this figure were picked up *if* the owner was observed to have in his hands one property above this figure, or held several properties of smaller value which added up to NARV of Rs. 1,000 or over. For both Colombo and Kandy, my survey did not encompass allotments held by companies and other corporate bodies.

The same cautionary provisions referred to under table 7 (b) apply here. For a more detailed explanation of the municipal registers and the cautionary provisos which should be attached to my analysis, readers must await the publication of the results of this survey in the form of a tabular list of the principal property holders.

The de Soysas: Only those whom I happened to identify as the direct descendants of W. Joseph de Soysa and C. H. de Soysa have been listed above. There were undoubtedly others. By the 1920s, too, many of C. H. de Soysa's grandchildren, some of whom I may not have identified, may have been property owners in Colombo.

NARV: This was the Municipality's appraisal of what they considered should be the annual rateable income, should the building be rented out. It does not mean that the owners were restricted to these limits, if and when they rented out these buildings and properties. Nor should the assessments be regarded as an accurate guide to the capital value. That depended on the market. (Information from Mr Colin Serasinghe.)

It would seem that the valuation did not encompass unused land. Allotments described as 'land' in the registers usually were not assessed for any sum or had only minimal NARV. In other words, the focus was on buildings and other establishments.

Table 8. *Plantations controlled by the Warusahännädigē de Soysas*: 1917 and 1927*

	1 No. of properties	2 Total extent	3 Extent cultivated	4 Extent uncultivated	7 Tea	8 Rubber	9 Coconut	10 Cinnamon	12 Cocoa	13 Other products
1917										
Executors of Lady de Soysa's Estate	10	694	574	120			372	155		47
A. J. R. de Soysa	10	3,787	2,669	1,118		788	1,593	208		80
E. L. F. de Soysa (Snr.)	26	6,816	4,686	2,130	882	530	3,254		20	
J. W. C. de Soysa	8	1,487	1,275	212		33	1,050	25	167	
J. S. Walter de Soysa[a]	4	940	495	445			495			
Mrs J. S. W. de Soysa	1	175	175	—			175			
L. W. A. [Wilfred] de Soysa	20	8,039	5,656	2,383	427	1,565	3,529	125		10
Mrs L. W. A. de Soysa	1	50	50	—		50				
R. E. S. de Soysa	22	6,336	3,535	2,801	1,265	295	1,865	13	13	84
T. H. A. de Soysa	8	3,056	2,253	803	549	255	1,449			
T. H. A. and A. J. R. de Soysa	1	2,589	2,589	—			2,589			
A. H. T. de Soysa	1	714	518	196	266	24	107	121		
Total	112	34,683	24,475	10,208	3,389	3,540	16,478	647	200	221
1927										
Heirs of Lady de Soysa	3	148	120	28			120			
A. H. T. de Soysa	6	1,231	1,162	69	138	644	291	45		44
A. J. R. de Soysa	3	268	252	16			252			
C. J. R. de Soysa[b]	1	821	715	106			615			100
E. L. F. de Soysa	17	4,946	3,732	1,214	149	939	2,607			37
Mrs E. L. F. de Soysa	3	579	531	48		41	487			3
Mrs J. S. W. de Soysa	1	176	176	—			176			
J. W. C. de Soysa	6	1,213	1,203	10		38	1,165			
L. W. A. de Soysa	15	6,087	4,448	1,639	110	1,104	2,996		3	235
Mrs L. W. A. de Soysa	1	50	50	—		50				
Mrs Mary M. de Soysa[c]	1	1,060	358	702	235	(73)				50
R. E. S. de Soysa	19	9,367	6,360	3,007	1,667	656	3,744		50	243
T. H. A. de Soysa	1	80	80	—			80			
Walter [J. S. W.?] de Soysa[a]	5	1,610	1,068	542			1,068			
Total	82	27,636	20,255	7,381	2,299	3,545	13,601	45	53	712

Source:
Author's compilations from Ferguson's *Ceylon Directories* for 1917 and 1927 on the foundations provided by the work of several research assistants.

Notes:
[a]James Samuel Walter de Soysa (born: 1880) also had a son named Walter but the latter died in 1924 from a drowning accident in Cambridge.
[b]Charles Joseph Richard de Soysa: third child and eldest son of A. J. R. de Soysa.
[c]The wife of A. J. R. de Soysa, *née* de Silva, a daughter of Lindamulagē David de Silva. There are discrepancies in the statistical details relating to the plantation under her name. Some adjustments have been made.
*For a genealogy of the Warusahännädigē de Soysas, see Roberts, 1975a; and for useful biographical data see A. Wright (ed.), *Twentieth Century Impressions of Ceylon*, London: 1907.

Table 9. *Caste composition of principal Sinhalese buyers of 'waste land': 1860–89, using Patrick Peebles' data*

				Percentages		
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Caste	No. of proprietorships	Acreage	Sum paid Rs.	% of total proprietorships	% of total acreage	% of total sum paid
Karāva	39	45,347	1,149,007	54.8	75.8	80.3
Goyigama	16	9,732	166,168	22.5	16.2	11.6
Unidentified	16	4,745	115,627	22.5	7.9	8.0
	71	59,824	1,430,802	100.0	100.0	100.0
de Croos family	3	2,102	69,889	—	(3.5)*	(4.9)*

Source: Compilations by Patrick Peebles from the registers of Crown land sales of 'waste land'. For his list of principal buyers, see Peebles, 1973, pp. 254–6. For a fuller list, see Roberts (ed.), 1979. The caste analysis is mine.

*Percentage of combined figures; i.e. taking col. 2 as our example, percentage of 61,926 (or 59,824 + 2,102).

Table 10. *The principal Sinhalese plantation proprietorships in 1917: a caste analysis*

	Numbers								
	U	1 Properties	2 Total extent	3 Extent cultivated	4 Extent uncultivated	7 Tea	8 Rubber	9 Coconut	10–13 Other products
Karāva	65	399	116,156	87,314	28,842	12,317	14,653	55,525	4,819
Goyigama	38	203	46,253	41,653	4,600	3,466	2,843	32,268	3,076
Salagama	5	24	8,875	8,288	587	424	836	5,358	1,670
Durāva	1	3	569	569				569	
Mixed	3	4	1,837	1,071	766	722	349		
Unidentified	15	30	13,361	9,396	3,965	22	1,660	5,621	2,093
Total	127	663	187,051	148,291	38,760	16,951	20,341	99,341	11,658
	Percentages								
Karāva	51.2	60.2	62.1	58.9	74.4	72.7	72.0	55.9	41.3
Goyigama	30.0	30.6	24.7	28.0	11.9	20.4	14.0	32.5	26.4
Salāgama	4.0	3.6	4.7	5.6	1.5	2.5	4.1	5.4	14.3
Durāva	0.8	0.4	0.3	0.4				0.6	
Mixed	2.4	0.6	1.0	0.7	2.0	4.2	1.7		
Unidentified	11.8	4.5	7.1	6.3	10.2	0.1	8.2	5.6	18.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Compilations form Ferguson's *Ceylon Directory for 1917* which led to a list of the principal plantation holdings based on those having *480 acres* or over. This list of 166 holdings is published in Roberts, 1977, pp. xlviiff. For a fuller explanation, see that table. Note that one or two holdings should perhaps be amalgamated, i.e. they might refer to the same individual.

Caste Tabulation: My own information was supplemented at various times by the assistance of Messrs D. B. Ellepola, Sena Jayasuriya, R. H. de Mel, Sunimal Fernando, Cecil Pereira, James T. Rutnam and others.

Column U: Refers to units of ownership, i.e. to partnerships as well as individually owned properties. A partnership was counted as one, however many individuals were involved in it. Hence the figures differ slightly from those in table 7.2 in Roberts, 1977, p. lxi.

Table 11. *The principal Sinhalese plantation proprietorships in 1927: a caste analysis*

	Numbers								
	U	1 Properties	2 Total extent	3 Extent cultivated	4 Extent uncultivated	7 Tea	8 Rubber	9 Coconut	10–13 Other products
Karāva	74	410	127,980	99,865	28,115	10,734	26,302	58,369	4,460
Goyigama	58	247	58,021	49,044	8,977	4,369	4,470	35,029	2,176
Salāgama	6	53	17,335	14,038	3,297	675	2,355	10,118	890
Durāva	2	2	1,457	658	799	109	549		
Navandanna	1	5	1,492	981	511	596		385	
Unidentified	20	56	16,475	11,173	5,302	867	2,127	6,549	1,630
Total	161	773	222,760	175,759	47,001	17,350	38,803	110,450	9,156
	Percentages								
Karāva	46.0	53.0	57.4	56.8	59.8	61.9	67.8	52.8	48.7
Goyigama	36.0	31.9	26.0	28.0	19.1	25.2	19.2	31.7	23.8
Salāgama	3.7	6.8	7.9	8.0	7.0	3.9	6.1	9.2	9.7
Durāva	1.2	0.2	0.6	0.4	1.7	0.6	1.4		
Navandanna	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.5	1.1	3.4		0.3	
Unidentified	12.4	7.2	7.4	6.3	11.3	5.0	5.5	5.9	17.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Compilations from Ferguson's *Ceylon Directory, 1927* which resulted in the list of principal plantation holdings in Roberts (ed.), 1979, chap. 4, table 2. The 1927 data has been carefully checked over, but it is probable that a few errors and discrepancies entered the compilation. Acreage figures should be treated as approximations.

Column U: Refers to partnerships as well as individually owned properties. There was always great difficulty in disaggregating and aggregating similar names, so that some errors would have been inevitable here. The figures here should, therefore, be treated as broad guides. For a fuller understanding, see the notes in the table published in Roberts (ed.), 1979, chap. 4.

Caste Tabulation: Personal knowledge and the findings of the investigation relating to the principal plantation owners in 1917 (table 10) provided the foundation for this process of identification. In addition, I was assisted by Messrs R. H. de Mel, E. A. G. de Silva, H. A. Koattegoda, Sena Jayasuriya and S. S. Perera.

Special Note: There are considerable difficulties in this task. It is also a field in which individual annoyance could easily be aroused. I have attempted to be as accurate as possible but can hardly claim immunity from errors.

Following an alphabetical order, the names of proprietary units have been listed below under appropriate sub-headings so that my attempts can be cross-checked. Question marks indicate doubtful identifications.

Karāva

Mrs J. G. Abeydeera
J. G. Abeydeera
Mrs C. Amarasuriya
Mrs H. Amarasuriya
Mrs E. S. Balasuriya
E. C. de Fonseka
Heirs of *Mudaliyar* S. R. de Fonseka
Chas. F. de Mel
Frank J. M. de Mel
Henry L. de Mel
Heirs of J. M. or J. Mathias de Mel
V. Johannes de Mel
Heirs of A. H. D. B. de Silva
Heirs of Chas. P. de Silva
Dr K. J. [Justin] de Silva
S. Thomas de Silva
W. A. de Silva
A. [Albert] H. T. de Soysa
C. J. R. de Soysa
E. L. F. de Soysa
Mrs E. L. F. de Soysa
J. W. Charles de Soysa
Mr and Mrs [J. S.] Walter de Soysa
L. W. A. de Soysa
Mrs Mary M. de Soysa
R. E. S. de Soysa
Wilfred L. P. de Soysa
Arthur V. Dias
A. V., L. L. M. and A. M. Clement Dias
Mr and Mrs C. E. A. Dias
P. C. H. Dias
Heirs of P. Jeremias Dias
Mrs P. W. Dias (?)
[Francis James] Fernando
F. J. Lucas Fernando sen.
F. J. Lucas Fernando jun.
H. Bastian Fernando
Sir H. Marcus Fernando
H. Santiago Fernando
[H] James P. Fernando
L. B. Fernando
P. C. A. and P. S. Fernando and W. A. B. Soysa (?)
Dr W. Alfred Fernando
W. Daniel Fernando
Heirs of W. Lodwin Fernando
Mr and Mrs A. F. R. Goonewardena
Dr A. S. Goonewardena
E. M. W. Jayasuriya
K. C. Juanis Appu [de Silva]
Charles Peiris
Heirs of H. J. [Henry Joseph] Peiris
Mrs H. J. Peiris

H. W. [Watson] Pieris
Sir James Peiris
J. L. D. Peiris
Mrs Francis Perera
Mrs M. C. Perera
Dr M. G. Perera
Mr and Mrs S. F. H. Perera
S. F. H., C. G. A. and Leslie Perera and P. P. Abeywardena
Wilmot A. and Leslie R. Perera
Heirs of Mrs A. W. Pieris
G. T. [George Theobald?] Pieris
Henry A. Pieris
H. A. Pieris (?)
Lambert L. Pieris
L. H. S. Pieris
R. L. de F. Pieris
Mrs M. Salgado and Mrs F. L. de Fonseka
D. M. Samaraweera
J. W. Samaraweera
H. P. Weerasooriya
E. [Emmanuel] de S. Wijeyeratne
O. B., C. S. B., L. J. O., T. M. A. Wijeyesekere and Miss C. L. H. Wijeyesekere

Goyigama

D. A. P. Abeyratne
Heirs of James Alwis
D. J. Amaratunga
G. [Ganepallekoralagē] M. Bandara
Heirs of *Maha Mudaliyar* Peter Dias Bandaranaike
Sir Solomon Dias Bandaranaike
Mr and Mrs Walter Dias Bandaranaike
W. Dias Bandaranaike, Reginald Dias, H. E., F. H. and Mrs Eva Dias
Mr and Mrs C. E. Corea
Mrs H. E. Corea
E. S. Dassenaike and Kumarihamy
P. C. Dedigama
Mrs S. F. de Silva and 3 minors
Heirs of S. Paul de Silva
S. Paul and S. C. de Silva
Heirs of *Mudaliyar* D. [Dionis] Godage (?)
W. D. R. [Robert] Goonaratna [Gunaratne]
E. W. [Edwin W.] Goonatilaka
A. H. Goonetilleke
Abraham Goonewardena (?)
H. Don Carolis [Hewavitarne] & Sons
Mudaliyar D. G. K. Jayakody
D. C. D. [Don Charles Dias] Jayasuriya
A. P. Jayawardena
J. V. Gomis Jayawardena (?)
V. E. and W. H. Jayesundera
Col. T. G. Jayewardene
D. D. Karunaratne
Mrs Alice Kotelawela
Mrs J. P. Obeyesekere
Sir S. C. Obeyesekere
Sir S. C. Obeyesekere, Felix Dias and Peter de Saram
Heirs of *Mudaliyar* J. A. Perera
M. G. Perera
J. E. Reginald Perera Seneviratna Gunatilake
D. M. Rajapakse
A. A. W. Ratnayake
G. L. P. Rupasinghe
E. J. Samarawickrame
D. C. Senanayake
D. S. Senanayake
F. R. Senanayake
Mrs F. R. Senanayake
Heirs of F. R. Senanayake
Heirs of *Mudaliyar* D. B. Seneviratne
Heirs of *Mudaliyars* Seneviratne and Jayewardene
Mr and Mrs N. D. B. Silva
N. D. S. Silva
N. D. A. Silva-Wijeyesinghe
S. Belin Silva (?)
Heirs of James A. Sirimanne
A. A. Wickremesinghe
R. J. Wijetunga
Mrs H. Wijewardena
D. L. Wijewardena
Mr and Mrs D. R. Wijewardene
A. C. G. Wijeyekoon
V. S. [de S.] Wikramanayake

Salāgama

A. E. de Silva
Fred de Zoysa
G. Robert de Zoysa
Mudaliyar A. E. Rajapakse
Tudor Rajapakse
W. M. Rajapakse

Durāva

W. S. [Watutantrigē Simon] de Alwis
W. S. de Alwis and A. D. Jayasekera (?)

Navandanna

Sir T. E. de Sampayo

Unidentified

D. D. Abeyesekera
B. F. Abeyesekera
A. M. Abeygunaratna
Heirs of *Mudaliyar* Abeysinghe
Mudaliyar H. A. Dahanayake
K. C. A. de Silva
Dr N. D. J. de Silva
W. S. de Silva
C. H. L. Dissanayake
A. P. Fernando
M. S. Fernando & Co.
L. Marco Fernando
J. S. Paranavitane (syndicate)
Gate Mudaliyar D. G. Pieris
R. P. Weerasooriya
J. de S. Wickramasekera
E. A. Wijesingha

Table 12. *Ethnic composition of the principal Ceylonese plantation owners and plantation proprietorships: 1917 and 1927*

	1917				1927			
Ceylonese ethnic groups	1 No. of persons	2 No. of proprietorships	3 % of total persons	4 % of total proprietorships	5 No. of persons	6 No. of proprietorships	7 % of total persons	8 % of total proprietorships
Sinhalese	125	127	75.3	77.9	182	161	72.2	72.2
Ceylon Tamils	16	14	9.6	8.5	27	24	10.7	10.8
Moors	8	8	4.8	4.9	11	11	4.4	4.9
Burghers	4	3	2.4	1.8	12	11	4.8	4.9
Bharathas	5	5	3.0	3.1	6	5	2.4	2.2
Colombo Chetties	6	3	3.6	1.8	4	2	1.6	0.9
Others	2	2	1.2	1.2	9	6	3.6	2.7
Ethnicity uncertain	0	0	—	—	1	1	0.4	0.4
Mixed partnerships	—	1	—	0.6	—	2	—	0.9
	166	163	100.0	100.0	252	223	100.0	100.0

Source: The principal plantation owners listed in Roberts (ed.), 1977, table 4, and Roberts (ed.), 1979, chap. 4, table 2. Also see tables 10 and 11, above.

Notes: There were a few holdings which were held in partnership: 15 in the 1917 list as against 148 held individually; and 27 in 1927 in contrast with 196 individually held holdings. *Cols. 2 and 6* represent the sum of holdings each being counted as one, whether it was held individually or collectively. *Cols. 1 and 5*, on the other hand, focus on the individuals. Thus, under *Cols. 1 and 5*:

A partnership of two different individuals counted as two, unless no specific names (e.g. 'and others') were provided.

Proprietorships described as 'Heirs of' were also counted.

Individuals whose names appeared twice were not counted twice.

A holding in the possession of a married couple counted for 2.

Notes on the tabulation for the year 1917:

The similarity between the figures in cols. 1 and 2 is misleading, especially with reference to the Sinhalese. Some individuals appeared twice, in their own right and in partnership with others, but were not counted twice in col. 1.

E. D. Pereira and Marcellus Pereira were treated as Sinhalese, though they could also be Burgher or Bharatha.

The holding under 'J. de Mel' was counted under col. 2, but not included in the Sinhalese count in col. 1 because it was interpreted as Jacob de Mel or J. M. de Mel who were already enumerated.

The Bharathas (Parava) tend to intermarry with Sinhalese Catholics and Burghers, apart from their own community.

The individuals named 'Fernando' were tabulated as Sinhalese though one or two could very well be Burgher or Bharatha.

Among the Colombo Chetties, Mr and Mrs C. M. Brito and P. Britopulle belonged to families which became closely linked with the Ceylon Tamils. The three Abeyesunderes, on the other hand, represent a family which linked itself by marriage with some Goyigama families; and could be viewed in the long run as Sinhalese.

Table 13. *Principal Sinhalese property owners in Colombo in 1927: a caste analysis*

	Figures		Percentages			
	1	2	3	4	5	6
	No. of proprietorships	Total NARV	% of total, col. 1	% of total, NARV	% of grand total, col. 1	% of grand total, NARV
Karāva	29	524,527	31.9	41.9	22.8	33.3
Goyigama	40	454,136	44.0	36.3	31.5	28.8
Wahumpura	5	123,636	5.5	9.9	3.9	7.8
Salāgama	8	70,036	8.8	5.6	6.3	4.4
Durāva	8	72,865	8.8	5.8	6.3	4.6
Navandanna	1	5,500	1.1	0.4	0.8	0.3
Total	91	1,250,700	100.0	100.0	—	—
Unidentified	36	325,882			28.3	20.7
Grand Total	127	1,576,582			100.0	100.0

Source: Housing Registers of the Colombo Municipal Council for the year 1927. The data was collected by Miss Shireen Samanasooriya, and the sorting and arithmetic was undertaken by Mrs J. Jogaratnam, Shona Roberts and the author.

NARV: 'net annual rateable value'. The Municipality's assessments seem to pertain only to those allotments with buildings for those described as 'land' have no valuation or only a minimal assessment. The NARV represents what the Municipality considered to be the annual rateable income. It does not represent the rental value in the market. Nor does it mean that the property in question was actually rented out. (I am grateful to Mr Colin Serasinghe for information on this point.)

Method of compilation: Using the arbitrary cut-off mark of Rs. 1,000 NARV, the relevant details for all assessments (except those pertaining to companies, churches and other corporate institutions) were noted. Once a proprietary unit had entered the list, an attempt was made to pick up all the entries under the control of this unit – i.e. even those assessed below Rs. 1,000. And where a man had a string of properties with low assessments which added up to over Rs. 1,000 NARV, his name was also entered. In view of the lengthy period of time over which the work was done, the mass of entries and the confusion of names, it follows that a comprehensive coverage of entries assessed below the figure of Rs. 1,000 could not be effected. *Col. 2* must, therefore, be read as a minimal total for most of the property owners.

Principal proprietary units: arbitrarily defined as those whose NARV added up to Rs. 5,000 or more.

Caste tabulation: this was based on personal knowledge and the information yielded by the compilations leading to tables 10, 11 and 14. In a few instances where the *gē* names of lesser-known individuals were available, I was assisted by Mr Chandra Vitarana.

Note: The total includes a few individuals defined as Sinhalese who may, in fact, be Burgher or Bharatha: namely, Archibald Fernando, Rosairo Gaetan Pereira and Jane Mary Pereira. It also includes the de Sarams (Goyigama) and R. L. Pereira (Durāva), families with strong Burgher or European connections.

Table 14. *Official estimates supplied by the Municipality re the assets of rich Sinhalese in five wards of Colombo in 1915: caste composition of the leading ninety*

	No. of proprietorships*	Appraised value: Rs.	% of total appraised value
Karāva	23	3,830,870	44.8
Goyigama	24	2,194,970	25.7
Wahumpura	5	734,481	8.6
Salāgama	8	680,750	8.0
Durāva	6	491,360	5.7
Mixed*	1	303,470	3.5
Rajaka	3	173,660	2.0
Navandanna	3	141,000	1.6
Total	73	8,550,561	100.0
Caste unidentified	17	1,312,950	= 13.3% of the total below
	90	9,863,511	

Source: DNA Lanka, 76/146. In compiling this material I was assisted by Miss Shireen Samanasooriya and my wife, Shona. The list is published in Roberts, (ed.), 1977, table 5, and Roberts (ed.), 1979, chap. 4, table 3.

Wards: Colpetty, Maradana, New Bazaar, San Sebastian and Slave Island as they existed in 1915. The missing wards are Fort, Kotahena and Wellawatte.

Col. 2: The basis of assessment is not clear. Obviously the properties owned by many individuals extended across several wards. It is evident that in many cases the assessments have been amalgamated under one head by the municipal authorities, though in a few instances – usually lesser-known individuals – properties in several wards have been listed separately. In any event, this means that for most of the 'leading ninety' the estimates *probably* encompass their holdings in all eight wards.

*Only 1 of the 90 proprietorships involved a non-familial partnership. There were 5 or 6 individuals listed in this partnership and it has been listed here as 'mixed' because I reckon that W. M. and James Fernando were Watutantrigē Fernandos and, therefore, Durāva, whereas D. M. and B. A. Suwaris may be Karāva and the caste identity of the other Fernandos in this partnership is not known.

Notes:

There were 452 holdings listed by the authorities, but a few should be amalgamated because they refer to the same person (not perceived by the officials).

Rs. 40,000 was arbitrarily taken as a cut-off mark to separate the leading men of property in Colombo from the rest.

While a comprehensive caste analysis of all those listed will reveal somewhat different proportions in the percentages it is unlikely that a major revision would be necessary.

Table 15. *A caste analysis of the directors and managers of some industrial business concerns, 1961: by Hans-Dieter Evers*

	Industrial enterprises	*Other enterprises*			
	Sinhalese directors and managers in Ceylonese industrial enterprises*	Sinhalese directors and managers in state and private enterprises†			
		Persons		Percentages	
	1 No. of persons	2 State	3 Private	4 State	5 Private
Karāva	61	14	53	29	54
Goyigama	40	20	14	42	25
Salāgama	1	—	—	—	—
Navandanna	2	1	5	2	5
Others	3	—	—	—	—
No information	23	13	16	27	16
Total	130**	48	98	100	100

Source: Tables 7 and 9 in Hans-Dieter Evers, *Kulturwandel in Ceylon*, Baden-Baden: Verlag August Lutzeyer, 1964, pp. 169–70.

*These were 130 Sinhalese in a total of 287 people in his sample; 55 Tamils, 46 Europeans, 18 Burghers, 17 Moors, 9 Borahs, 9 other Indians, 3 unidentified. Note: he is using the term 'Ceylonese' in the sense 'in Ceylon'.

**These 130 filled 146 managerial roles. The 287 persons in the total occupied 321 such roles.

†Executives.

Table 16. *Provincial distribution of English media education, 1890–1927*

	No. of English schools			English schools percentage distribution			No. of pupils on roll			Pupils percentage distribution			Pupils: proportion to population
	1890	1911–12	1927	1890	1911–12	1927	1890	1911–12	1927	1890	1911–12	1927	1927
Provinces	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*	*11*	*12*	*13*
Western	60	94	103	56.6	38.8	38.7	4,782	15,408	24,028	49.1	43.5	47.4	1 in 7
Central	*12*	*35*	*35*	*11.3*	*14.4*	*13.1*	*1,256*	*4,084*	*5,963*	*12.8*	*11.5*	*11.7*	*1 in 12*
Southern	12	30	29	11.3	12.3	10.9	1,210	4,346	5,800	12.4	12.2	11.4	1 in 8
Northern	10	46	57	9.4	19.0	21.4	1,667	8,188	10,467	17.1	23.1	20.6	1 in 6
Eastern	4	11	11	3.7	4.5	4.1	384	1,337	1,202	3.9	3.7	2.3	1 in 10
Northwestern	7	12	13	6.6	4.9	4.8	259	768	1,058	2.6	2.1	2.0	1 in 10
Northcentral	*0*	*1*	*3*	—	*0.4*	*1.1*	*00*	*115*	*196*	—	*0.3*	*0.3*	*1 in 15*
Uva	*1*	*6*	*7*	*0.9*	*2.4*	*2.6*	*179*	*596*	*813*	*1.8*	*1.6*	*1.6*	*1 in 25*
Sabaragamuwa	*0*	*7*	*8*	—	*2.8*	*3.0*	*00*	*547*	*1,115*	—	*1.5*	*2.2*	*1 in 13*
Total	106	242	266	100.0	100.0	100.0	9,737	35,389	50,642	100.0	100.0	100.0	1 in 10

Source: Administration Reports of the Directors of Public Instruction or Education for relevant years. This table has also been printed in Michael Roberts (ed.), *Documents of the Ceylon National Congress*, 1977, vol. 1.

'English schools': Does not include the schools described (in some years) as 'Primary English' and 'Anglo-Vernacular' schools. There were three categories of schools of this type: Government, Aided (Grant-in-Aid) and Unaided. The figures for 1890 and 1900 in cols. 3 and 4 do not, unfortunately, include those for Unaided Schools. These columns, therefore, are not strictly comparable.

'Pupils on Roll': By 1900, the *AR* also provide details *re* the average attendance, e.g. in 1900 the latter = 13,006 as against the 19,857 on roll.

Notes: Around 1911 a change seems to have been effected in the categorisation of the schools which may have had a bearing on the data.

Also see the figures for 1911–12 in table 3; *re* cols. 3 and 4, the figures for 1911–12 are substantially higher than those for 1910–11.

The provinces that fall fully within the old Kandyan Kingdom are in italics. A good portion of the Northwestern Province and a part of the Eastern Province also lay within the kingdom. Compare maps 2 and 3.

Appendixes

APPENDIX 1

Problems and cautionary notes concerning the information derived from the plantation directories in the sequential series known as Ferguson's Ceylon 'Directory'

In the year 1859 the proprietor and editor of the *Ceylon Observer*, A. M. Ferguson, published a compilation entitled *Ceylon: Summary of Useful Information and Plantation Gazetteer.* This handbook included a list of the principal coffee plantations, their locations and the names of their owners. Under somewhat different titles, similar handbooks were produced in 1861, 1863, 1864, 1865, 1866–8 and 1870–1. From 1863 the title was *The Ceylon Directory, Calendar and Compendium of Useful Information* and in 1883–4 it was altered to *The Ceylon Handbook and Directory Calendar and Compendium of Useful Information*, and an increasingly elaborate compilation was published every year or every other year. In this work A. M. Ferguson was assisted by his nephew, John Ferguson, and by the staff attached to their newspaper. In the twentieth century, the new proprietors of the *Ceylon Observer* continued this annual publication.

In compiling the lists of plantations the Fergusons drew upon their own extensive knowledge and their wide range of contacts among European planters, which they used to elicit the necessary information through correspondence. As the procedure was routinised, then, the plantation directories were compiled on the basis of information supplied on a voluntary basis by the agency houses and plantation owners themselves. These entries were revised every year. To quote from the *Directory* for 1890: 'The Estates Directory has been corrected to the end of April 1890 – numerous "proofs" having been circulated for that purpose, many hundred of applications by letter having been made, and due revision having been afforded by the Colombo Agents. It is, therefore, allowing for changes while printing, about as accurate as anything of the kind can be, perfect accuracy being unattainable' (p. 739).

This data was assembled under the heading of 'Coffee Estates' (later, tea and rubber plantations) in sub-divisions encompassing separate planting districts; Alagalla, Ambagamuwa, etc. Within each of these planting districts the plantations were arranged alphabetically and included the Tamil name for each plantation, the name of the proprietor (or proprietors), a column indicating the lessee or estate agency (if any), another giving the name of the resident manager and several columns of statistical data (see plates 1 & 2). In the 1860s separate lists of coconut and cinnamon plantations were added at the end, arranged under provincial sub-divisions. These contained only one column of statistics, though *at times* the distinction between the total extent of property and the area under cultivation was indicated by the arrangement: 800–600, as an example. Besides these three groups of plantations, at the end of the first (and principal) group of coffee (or tea or rubber) plantations, an additional sub-division was included from 1880–1 under the heading: 'Low-Country Plantations with New Products'. An index of plantations was also provided for the principal grouping. In the

KALUTARA [Tamil: Kaltera.]

[See Moratuwa under Lowcountry Plantations for a few estates north of the Kaluganga, sometimes counted as in Kalutara.]

Total extent of cultivation about 20,325 acres; total extent of Estates about 32,195½ acres. District distant from Kandy 104, and from Colombo 30 miles. Elevation 100 to 500 feet. Hospital and Dispensary on Culloden Estate. Neboda.

Estates.	Tamil Names.	Proprietors.	Agents or Correspondents.	Resident Managers and Assistant Superintendents.	Acreage: Total.	Cultivated.	Tea.	Coffee.	Cardamoms.	Other Prodts.	Tea & Coffee.	Grass & Tim.	Post Towns or Stations.
Ambetenne F ...	Ambatenne ...	Cooper, Cooper & Johnson, Ld. ...	Gordon Frazer & Co. ...	C. Henly and A. T. Coulton ...	700	452	452	..	...	...	...	...	Kalutara 12
Anchipanagoda (including Kunilakande and Maputugala)	...	M. A. Perera ...	W. H. Davies & Co.	W. Salgado ...	133	95	95	...	...	...	...	...	Horana
Arapolakande F	Arapolakande ...	Eastern Produce & Estates Co., Ld. ...	Eastern Produce & Estates Co., Ld...	H. V. Bagot ...	519	491	451	...	...	40*a*	...	28*b*	Neboda 9K
Becherton F ...	Allapally (Included in Tudugalla.)												
Boyahugodawatta	Horowalla T ...	A. Sirimane ...	Somerville & C ...	J. Sirimane & D. L. Mendis	487	328	170	..	..	158*c*	..	..	Benota 6
Clontarf	Collendar ...	General Ceylon Tea Estates Co., Ltd...	Carson & Co., and F. L. Clements	J. T. Withers ...	245	195	195	...	...	...	...	50	Neboda
Clyde (including Liskillan & Kaluganga F ...	Cooroondoowatte	Clyde Tea Estates Co., Ld. ...	Lewis Brown & Co.	G. G. Massy & Condr.	715	546	546	..	...	...	...	169 for.	Kalutara S. 7½
Culloden F ...	Kandekaduwa ...	Rosehaugh Tea Co.	Geo. Steuart & Co.	R. W. Harrison, C. S. Arunachalam, T. E. Caldera & A. Mututamby ...	1397	962	863	...	...	14*d*	...	85	[Kal. 12 Neboda 9
Dicksland ...	Nahalle ...	R. S. Wijeyesekera ...	Proprietor ...	E. Wijeyesekera ..	80	54	54	...	...	..	...	...	do
Dolly ...	Caddarawa ...	Heirs of Don Pedro	Caldera ...	A. Native *Lessee* ...	10	6	6	...	...	...	..	...	Kalutara
Eagles Land ...	(Included in Glanrhos.)												
Elladuwa & Yatadolawatte ...	Elladuwa ..	E. J. Koelman ...	Baker & Hall ...	T. L. Srinivasagam...	610	300	300	...	...	...	...	135	Kalutara
Ellekanda *x* ...	...	Rosehaugh Tea Co...	Geo. Steuart & Co...	R. Garnier & J. D. Nallwangsa ...	512	397	397*c*	...	...	...	...	..	Horana
Etungahatenna...	...	W. Chapman Dias ...	...	W P. Senewiratna ...	40	40	40	...	...	...	...	...	Neboda
Forest Lot 1608..	...	J. H. Grenier ...	...	*Forest* ...	142	...	...	...	...	...	..	...	do
Do ...	...	L. D. Harmanis ...	...	,, ...	39	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Kalutara

a Para Rubber. *b* Swamp. *c* Coconuts. *d* 14 acres Rubber and Para Rubber planted through 200 acres Tea, altogether 30,000 Para trees. *e* Coconuts among Tea. *x* Hospital at Panadure and Dispensary at Bandaragama.

1 List of tea plantations: Kalutara
Ferguson's *Ceylon Handbook and Directory*, 1901

NORTH-WESTERN PROVINCE—*Continued.*

Estates.	Proprietors.	Lessees or Agents.	Resident Managers and Asst. Superintendents.	Total Extent of Property in Acres and Cultivated.	Post Towns or Stations.
Nandawenam ...	Heirs of G. Jeronimus ...	Juse Kurey ...	Juse Kurey ..	195 ..	Puttalam
Naramula ...	T. Sanmugam ...	...	N. Suppar ...	300 ...	Dambadeniya
Nargawatte ...	P. P. Migel Pieris ...	Podisinho ...	Podisinho ...	39 ...	Marawila
Nedunkelawatte ..	Heirs of C. Tambyah ..	Tambo ...	Iyare ...	100—75 ...	Marawila
Nedunkelawatte ..	L. Fernando & others ..	Sriwardana James Silva ...	Aralis Silva ..	130 ..	do.
Nelligahawatte ..	M. L. Ugupolicar & others ...	W. S. Marku Costa ..	W. S. Marku Costa ..	200—20 ...	Tabowa
Nellunkulia ..	The Amalgamated Tea Est. Co.	Finlay, Muir & Co. ...	Montague E. Cooke ...	556—534 ..	Chilaw
Nugagahayaya ...	J. de Croos ...	Joseph Lawrenz ..	J. Lawrenz ...	72½ ..	Nainamadama
Orange Grove ..	Chas. Peiris ...	Owner ..	J. P. Panditasekere ..	375 ..	Polgahawela
Otukumbura ..	E. B. Daniels ..	..	Conductor ..	85 ..	Kurunegala
Palachola ..	Hon. Dr. W. G. Rockwood ..	..	Rasiah Pratt ...	120 ..	Puttalam
Do ..	S. Mories ..	..	J. K. F. Kirtisinha ..	110 ..	do
Do ..	A. M. C. Casie Chetty ..	...	Conductor ..	80 ..	do
Palugahawatte ...	Heirs of J. Martin ...	...	Conductor ..	25 ...	Kurunegala
Palugahawatte ..	Heirs of H. Andris Pieris ..	Joseph Pieris ..	M. Joseph Pieris ...	57 ..	Kakulawadiya
Palugahawatte ..	Simon Fernando Arachchi ..	Kapuruhami ...	Kapuruhami ...	45—38 ..	Nainamadama
Palugahayaya ...	Archbishop Melizan ...	Nicholas Annavi ...	Euguis Appu ..	60 ...	do
Palugaswewa ..	A. Baur ...	Proprietor ...	G. A. Scott. ...	484 ...	Chilaw
Pambella Mahawatte ...	Heirs of F. De Mel ...	...	Don Anthony ...	110 ...	Madampe
Pambela Punchiwatte ..	J. De Mel [Mel	..	G. F. Soysa ...	43 ..	do
Pambela-Pahalawatte ...	Johannes, Manuel & Jacob De	Don Anthony ...	...	100 ...	do
Panankulama ...	N. Noordeen ...	N. Noordeen ...	N. Noordeen ...	35 ...	Chilaw
Paniadukulam ...	Jacob De Mel [diram	...	B. Soyza ...	50 ...	Rajakadaluwa
Perapankuliya ...	D. J. Wijayawardana Muhan-	Proprietor.	James Perera ...	240—100 ..	Kakkapalliya
Periawilla ..	S. I. Mohammado Casim ..	Mariann Fonseka, *Lessee* ..	M. Fonseka ..	130 ..	Puttalam
Do ..	S. Sego Meydeen ..	..	S. Segoo Meydeen ..	75 ..	do
Peria Ottapani ..	H. Rosairo & Brothers ..	..	Conductor ..	80 ..	do
Periswatte ...	Heirs of J. Pieris ..	J. Jayewardene ..	Lewis Kankanama ...	100 ...	Madampe
Pitawalavagama ...	Heirs of M. Migel Fernando ...	Proprietors ..	A. Fernando ...	60 ...	do
Polwattapitiya ...	Jacob De Mel ..	...	S. de Zylva ...	35 ..	Kurunegala
Petuwatawana ...	Heirs of A. P. Rupasinha ...	T. Juse Perera ..	T. Juse Perera ...	30 ..	Madampe
Potuwewa ...	J. C. de Silva ..	J. C. de Silva ...	M. Anthony Perera ...	225 ...	Kahipotta

2 List of coconut palm plantations: Northwestern Province
Ferguson's *Ceylon Handbook and Directory*, 1901

twentieth century an index of coconut plantation owners – a useful embellishment for our purposes – was also introduced.

In 1861 and 1862 a few non-Europeans and Ceylonese were listed among the owners of coffee plantations, even if one or two entries gave no more information than the words 'A Native'. Gradually, however, the information on non-European plantation owners improved. It must be remembered that there was no land tax in British Ceylon (only a tax on paddy land which was also abolished in 1892). Nor was there any income tax till the early 1930s and estate duties were only introduced after the First World War. These conditions encouraged proprietors of plantation land to supply the *Ceylon Directory* with information. Indeed, a certain amount of prestige seems to have been attached to this fact by the 1880s: in the *Ceylon Directory for 1887–8*, two pages of addenda (pp. 943–4) were entered. These late entries detailed plantations within Hapitigam Korale in the Western Province. Many of these entries were from the families of the 'first class Goyigama'. In the light of the heated caste polemics of the 1880s this insertion is of considerable significance: the ownership of plantation land and its overt proclamation had become a status symbol.

To the question whether the plantation directories of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries represented a comprehensive survey of the principal non-European and indigenous plantation owners, however, the answer must be in the negative. Some individuals remained cautious about disclosing their property holdings. Others refrained from such ostentation. Whatever the reason, there were Ceylonese who did not supply the *Observer* with the necessary data.[1] On this count, therefore, the directories must not be viewed as a comprehensive source of information on the non-European plantation holdings.

The question of accuracy

The accuracy of the information that was published obviously rests on the veracity of the plantation owners and probably defies a generalised answer. Because these entries became a status symbol among the Ceylonese, one might suspect some exaggeration in the figures. Within the small community of the Ceylonese elites, however, blatant concoctions would have been difficult and would have been quite self-defeating. My impressions suggest that most owners attempted to supply information that was correct to the best of their knowledge. Nevertheless, specific inaccuracies can be pinpointed (e.g. see Peebles, 1973, p. 264) and I have found that on occasions all the plantations held by a landowner had not been entered. With individual Ceylonese proprietors, moreover, there were usually no agency houses to maintain faithful and elaborate records. Again, with coconut and cinnamon land the acreage figures are not to be fully relied on. Insofar as such coconut and cinnamon acreages (cols. 9 and 10 of the tables in this book) entered the figure relating to the total extent of cultivated property (col. 3) and that on the total extent of property (col. 2), any inaccuracies therein would have been diffused through the latter columns.

The degree of accuracy would also have been affected by the many difficulties in keeping track of changes in ownership. It is not clear what the compilers did to overcome these difficulties and what happened to a specific entry (plantation) once it was in their schedules and the owner died or handed it over to another person – and this information was *not* conveyed by anyone to the compilers. Did the old entry continue year in and year out? Was there weeding out? How effective was any such attempt?

[1] Personal communication from the late Shelton C. Fernando (during interview).

Doubts of this order are raised by the following examples: (i) the coffee plantation known as Rikilligasgodda, of 100 acres extent, was listed in the directories in the 1860s within the planting district of Upper Hewaheta under the names of D. A. de Silva and Appuhamy notary. It remained in the directories in 1901 (p. 1078) as an uncultivated property; (ii) several properties are listed under 'Heirs of the late Jas. Alwis' in the 1900s and 1910s, though James Alwis died in the year 1878. Explanations could be found in some cases (e.g. in the latter instance, it was probably entailed property or had not been sub-divided among the heirs because of pending litigation), but doubts cannot be entirely dispersed.

Again, in collating data from the plantation directory of 1927, I came across several plantations which had been listed twice, both in the main group and under coconut plantations. In a few cases, the figures did not tally and I was forced to make an arbitrary choice of one set of figures.

Problems of collation

These were tedious and monumental. And gave plenty of scope for human error. For the most part research assistants were used to note down each non-European plantation on separate cards. Inevitably, this raised questions of ethnic definition (see below) and in some instances Burgher and Ceylon Tamil proprietors were left out (but later picked up by me). Errors in transcription occurred, either on their part or mine (reading their cards). On at least two occasions it was only chance (a cross-check with previous decennial data) that led me to the discovery that the figure 1 had been noted as 7, in effect involving a difference of 600 acres.

The assembling and sorting out of names presented great difficulties. The plantation directories were rarely consistent or accurate in their spelling of Ceylonese proper names. In any event, such names as Goonewardena and Gunaratna, Peiris and Abeywardena, can be spelt in a great variety of ways. This means that the same Jeronis Pieris might enter the lists as 'J. Peiris' or 'J. Peries' or 'J. Peris' or 'Jeronis Pieris'; and one would not be certain if these referred to one person or several individuals with similar names. Again, if A. S. Goonewardena was listed on occasions as A. S. Gunewardene, the system of collating names in alphabetical order could easily conceal the possibility that these two cards referred to the same person. The names de Soysa, de Silva, de Alwis, etc. presented similar problems because they would often be printed without the prefix, so that the cards of the same individual would be assembled under D and under S (or A, etc.).

Even where the printing was consistent, there were problems with certain names which fell into the 'John Smith' category: were the two plantations in different districts listed under 'John Perera' owned by the same person or by two persons with the same name? Was 'Don Bastian de Silva' the same person as 'A. H. D. B. de Silva'? Was 'H. A. Pieris' the same individual as 'H. Andris Pieris' or 'H. A. Peiris'?[2]

The process of compilation leading to the lists of principal plantation owners in 1917 and 1927, and eventually to tables 10 and 11 in this study, were marked by numerous questions of this sort. Because I was able to locate a copy of the *Ceylon Directory* for 1927 and take it home, through the courtesy of Mr Scott Dirckz of George Steuart & Co., it was possible for me to cross-check the work of the research assistants (Misses Manel de Silva, Kaleel, and Sittampalam) with some thoroughness. It was not possible to do this

[2] For a specific illustration, see Roberts in *Modern Ceylon Studies*, vol. 1:1, 1970, p. 132 and n.76.

to the same degree with the 1917 figures. In working on the 1927 *Directory* I also discovered that some items listed in the index did not appear in the *Directory*, and vice versa.

Ethnicity

With certain surnames it was very difficult to say whether a person was a European, Eurasian, Burgher, Tamil or Bharatha. Such names as 'Wilson, Watson, Francis, Nicholas, Lucas' were especially problematic. However, after consultations with several persons with wide experience in various parts of Sri Lanka,[3] I was able to resolve a few uncertain identifications. While the Sinhalese names were easier to identify than most others (the Moors were the easiest), there can be little doubt that some Burgher and Bharatha names were treated as Sinhalese. Unless I had specific information to the contrary, such names as 'Pereira' and 'Fernando' were categorised as Sinhalese – whereas a few of them could be either Burgher or Bharatha. Similarly, it should be noted that even such surnames as 'de Silva' and 'Pieris' are found among the Burghers; and the latter is even applicable to Tamils. For this reason, the total Sinhalese complement in table 12 must be viewed as a slight overestimate. This shortcoming, however, does not seriously mar the caste statistics in tables 10 and 11 because the positive identifications are all Sinhalese.

[3] I am grateful to the following friends for their patient listening and assistance: Mr Rex A. Casinader, Mr and Mrs Devasirwathan, Mr D. B. Ellepola, Dr Dirckz, Miss Rene Ludowyk, Donavan and Shona Moldrich, Mr and Mrs J. Roosmale-Cocq, and Mrs Dodo Sirimanne.

APPENDIX 2

A contemporary newspaper account of the reception provided for a Karāva notable on his receiving the title of 'Mudaliyar' of the Governor's Gate' in 1853[1]

The procession from Colombo and welcome at Moratuwa of Jeronis de Soysa, Esq., after his appointment to the rank of *Mudaliyar* of the Governor's Gate

Note from the Editor of the Colombo Observer

Below we give a graphic and interesting account of the reception accorded at Colombo to the man whom, on account of his public spirit, Sir George Anderson has delighted to honour. The matter is more important than would appear at first sight to our English readers. The dignity conferred on Mr. De Soysa is one that has hitherto been jealously confined to the small knot of obstructives amongst the Sinhalese who call themselves first class Velales; and on this occasion the Maha Modliar, we believe, did his little best to prevent the Government from shocking the prejudices of the people – meaning by that phrase a little knot of Modliars – by conferring the highest Native rank in its gift on a man of the fisher caste. All honour to Sir George Anderson for the personal courage and decision displayed by him on this occasion. The British Government is not only too generous, but also too strong, to allow its own benevolent intentions, and the wheels of progress to be any longer impeded by foolish fears of offending antiquated caste prejudices.

The newly created Modliar is a Native Coffee Planter on a large scale; very enterprising and very wealthy. But his claims to the dignity conferred on him rest on the erection by him, at his own cost, of public works, such as Ambalamas and Bridges, the formation of roads, etc.

The Account from an Anonymous Pen

Colombo, June 10th, 1853

Sir, the elevation of Mr. Joronis De Soysa of Morotto to the rank of Modliar of the Governor's Gate, appearing to have caused a considerable sensation of satisfaction in the native mind, with possibly a little jealousy here and there, I have thought some account of the proceedings on his return to Morotto, would not be unacceptable to your readers, especially as you have already noticed in your columns the doings of his friends in Kandy, some of whom expressed the hope that their brethren in the Western Province would not suffer themselves to be outdone in rendering due honor to the newly appointed Modliar. Nor have they, as the proceedings of the 9th instant amply testify. I

[1] Account from the *Colombo Observer*, 13 June 1853, reprinted in William Skeen, *Adam's Peak: Legendary, Traditional and Historic Notices of the Samanala and Sri-Pada: with a Descriptive Account of the Pilgrim's Route from Colombo to the Sacred Footprint*, London: Edward Stanford, 1870, appendix M, pp. 369–77. Footnotes indicated by symbol are from Skeen; numbered footnotes are mine.

don't pretend to give you a very graphic account of everything that happened, being altogether unused to that style of composition; but, as I was present a considerable part of the day, I will endeavour to state what fell under my own observation, and from that and such other accounts as may reach you, you will be able, I dare say, to make out for your readers a much more interesting narrative than I can, – so you are welcome to use my information, and burn my MS., or publish it *in toto* just as you please.

Well then, at 7 A.M. according to invitation, I, together with many others, assembled at Grand Pass at the house of Mr. Soosew de Soysa, the Modliar's brother, where, in all the glory of gold and jewels, Joronis De Soysa Dharma Goonewardene Wepolle Jayasooria Dessanayake Karoonaratne, Modliar of the Governor's Gate, received the congratulations of his friends.

Europeans, Burghers, Natives of rank, wealth, and influence, Hindoos, Parsees, Moormen, etc. etc. came dropping in one after the other until the house was filled to overflowing. After partaking of a slight refreshment, hospitably provided by Soosew De Soysa, the ear-piercing fifes and deafening tom-toms of the Governor's Guard of Lascoreens, as they drew up into the Verandah, warned us that the business of the day was now about to begin. The Guard having had a dusty walk, and being moreover droughty souls, and withal not very much accustomed to their scarlet coats and conical caps, or the wielding of their venerable halberts, and antique, lion-headed, carving-knife-looking cutlasses, of course needed a dram each, by way of nerving them to their arduous duties; and judging from the apparent relish with which they tossed off their glasses, they got the genuine stuff. While this was going on, Guard No. 2 passed by. This, I believe, is the Guard belonging to the Salpitty Korle, and glories in a uniform of blue. The poor souls looked hard and longingly at their brother lascoreens in red, but, obedient to the stern commands of duty, marched on to their appointed station on Norris's road near the Racket ground.

In a few minutes the signal was given to start. The Guard, consisting of twenty-five men, preceded by the tom-tom beaters, took the lead; then came the Modliar attired in a coat of dark broad-cloth, over which was thrown his chain of honor, formed of above 150 sovereigns linked together in couples, and terminating in an ornament formed of a cluster of forty-five of the same coins;* crossing this was the sword belt of broad gold lace, from which hung suspended the sword encased in an elaborately chased silver scabbard inlaid with gold; the sword hilt was a mass of gems, principally rubies and emeralds, set in gold, the lustre of which was however completely eclipsed by the splendid jewels in the sword knot. Altogether the dress was a very rich and expensive affair – (I hear it estimated as worth about £1,000, but perhaps this included the brilliant and other rings worn by the Modliar) – and certainly it was terribly provocative to a serious infraction of the tenth commandment.

The Modliar's only son accompanied his father; behind them walked two lascoreens

* This was a mere temporary contrivance. The precious metal was subscribed for by about 700 of the Mudaliyar's personal friends, and was afterwards worked up into a handsome chain of honour, to which a corresponding medal was suspended, containing the following inscription. 'Presented to Joronis De Soysa, Esq., Dharma Goonewardene Wepolle Jayasooriya Dessanayake Karoonaratne, Modliar of the Governor's Gate; By his numerous friends, in token of their respect and esteem, and of the admiration with which they regard his benevolent exertions for the relief of the poorer classes, and his patriotic endeavours to promote the public good, etc. etc.' With this chain and medal he was invested by the Governor, at the Lēvee held at Queen's House, Colombo, on the 24th May, 1854.

clothed in scarlet habiliments, bearing talipots of honor over their heads. Then followed, also on foot, the greater part of those who had assembled at the house, the Mohandirams in full dress, with their talipot bearers, who sported vestments of such nondescript character, that no verbal description can do justice to them, and I am afraid no pictorial representation would be believed; the nearest approximation I can give your readers will be to remind them of Pantaloon at Bartholomew Fair, or old Shalabalar, so inseparably connected, with Punch and London street reminiscences. *Outré* as their appearance was, they nevertheless added to the picturesqueness of the effect produced by the groupings and costumes of the various races and nations there assembled.

The march began; guns were fired; the fifes squealed out most horribly shrill; the tom-tom beaters plied their sheepskins so vigorously, that one had to scream into his neighbour's ear to make him understand; frantic people rushed out of houses on either side of the road, and deluged with sweet-scented waters the man whom the Governor delighted to honour; and, either in their joy or for the fun of the thing, plentifully besprinkled all and sundry near them with the same; horsekeepers gravely led their master's carriages at a funeral pace in the far distant rear; and doubtless those who overtook it imagined at first they had come upon a funeral procession, for a vile cart driver, with a villainously high-piled load of black wood, looking for all the world like a hearse, *would* take the lead of the carriages.

Passing the Queen's Advocate's house, the Honourable Gentleman[2] himself came out and congratulated the Modliar on his elevation. From thence the procession wound up Barber street, down by Wolfendahl Church, along Main street to the Esplanade, where the scarlet Guard gave place to the Halberdiers in blue. Nothing particular occurred in this part of the route, unless a few slight passing showers be mentioned, which were more grateful than inconvenient; for walking in a crowd in the middle of a dusty road under a tropical sun is not the most pleasant thing imaginable; it was however amusing to note the shifts parties resorted to in an endeavour to escape being wetted. Imagine Cowesjee Cunjee,† the portly merchant of Main street, sharing with a stout Parsee friend a small China umbrella, scarcely big enough to cover the tops of their turbans; and the nondescript talipot-bearers, officiously covering their masters' heads, but taking good care at the same time to secure the best part of the talipot to themselves! More scented waters were sprinkled as Cunjee's stores were passed, and additions began to be made to the tail of the procession, which numerically more than compensated for the loss of those who by the calls of business and breakfast were here compelled to take leave of the Modliar.

Arrived at Colpetty the Modliar paid his respects to the Government Agent,[3] by whom he was warmly congratulated; and further on was met and complimented by Dr. Elliott, Mr. Dalziel and others. Outside the Gravets there was a halt for some time. Here the Fishers' Guard met the Modliar, he being a Fisher, and the first, I understand, of that caste, ever made Modliar of the Gate. Groups of picturesquely attired dancing boys, grotesquely masked mummers, and singers and tumblers, besides a numerous assemblage of friends and acquaintances were also here drawn up to pay their respects, and accompany their countryman to his home.

From this point to Morotto every step only added to the magnitude of the procession. Ascending the open carriage in readiness for him the Modliar again moved on.

[2] John Selby. [3] C. P. Layard.

† This gentleman, who died not long after the proceedings above described, was of the most bulky proportions; but as genial in manner as he was great in size.

Foremost went the tumblers, singers and dancers, delighting the concourse who surrounded them with their songs and antics; next the bands of tom-toms and fifes; then the Fishers' guard, followed by the Korle lascoreens and a body of belted peons. Then the observed of all observers, with his son and brother in the carriage, behind which still walked the two talipot bearers in scarlet; and after these a train of carriages and bandies, and a constantly increasing throng of pedestrians. Momentary halts were continually being made, so many crowded up to the carriage to congratulate its occupants. Old men from all parts, many scarcely able to totter, and some from Caltura and Pantura (the latter village being Mr. De Soysa's birthplace), came forward with almost infantile eagerness, some so overjoyed as to lose the power of utterance, others in such a state of excitation as to be unable to restrain their garrulity, and one declaring that now he was content to die, having seen what he never hoped to see, and what he should never see again.

When opposite the residence of the Mohandiram of the Salpitty Korle,[4] that fine old native gentleman came out and invited all who were disposed, to partake of refreshments, which he had most liberally provided, expressing at the same time his regret that official duties prevented him from having the pleasure of proceeding to Morotto with the Modliar. Further on, every village and path contributed its quota of human beings to the mass already congregated on the road; and the din of their rejoicing, the firing of guns and the shoutings of welcome were at times quite over-powering.

A little beyond Ratmalane is the fine Ambalama erected some years back by Mr. De Soysa. At this spot a decorated arch was thrown over the road, and here the Washermen of the District waited on the Modliar, requesting that he would allow them to do him the honor of spreading white cloths on the ground for him to walk on until he reached his house. This being done, all of course dismounted and finished the journey on foot. A light fence was thrown up on each side of the road from this point to Morotto, from which an elegant festoon or fringe of cocoanut leaves was suspended. All along, too, the inhabitants of the adjoining villages were drawn up; and to acknowledge and return the salutes he received, was no slight task for the Modliar.

From this point to Morotto, it was emphatically a triumphal procession. After walking about three quarters of a mile, the Modliar's eye was gladdened with the sight of a triumphal arch erected opposite his house. Stretching across the road, of an octagonal form, and about thirty-five feet in diameter, with a beautiful ceiling of open net-work, tastefully formed of the ferns and grasses and flowers of the neighbourhood, the arch, profusely decorated with fruits and flowers on its exterior, was unanimously pronounced to be the most elegant thing of the kind ever erected by natives; and it certainly was well worth a trip to Morotto to behold.

The number of people assembled at this point was immense. Far as the eye could range along the road, and around on the adjacent grounds, was one dense mass of humanity; men, women and children, all eagerly straining to catch a glimpse of their honoured countryman and benefactor. The lowest computation gave 5,000 as the number present; but many were of the opinion that at least 7,000 was the most correct estimate. Whichever be correct, it was a most gratifying sight, and such a one as it is but seldom the lot of a European to witness in Ceylon. The crush was very great at the front of the house, where Mr. De Soysa's numerous relatives had assembled to meet and welcome him home with all his honors. As the meeting was of the most affectionate and affecting kind, and more than one drew back with moistened eyes, I shall not dwell upon that part of the subject, – suffice it to say, that all seemed *over-joyed.*

[4] Don Carolis Sewewickrame [*sic*] according to the *Ceylon Almanac of 1853*, p. 359.

Looking from the Verandah down on the crowd, it was one sea of heads and up-turned eyes. The Act of Appointment was now produced, shewn to all assembled, read first in English and then translated into Singhalese; whereupon one in the crowd made a short speech, and then uprose a loud *Hurrah!* that would have done credit to the lungs of a London mob. Now commenced a right joyous carousal. Numerous booths and open bungalows had been erected in the compound, where tables were spread; and well did multitude after multitude do justice to the good things the Modliar had provided. Inside the house a more select company or companies were entertained, consisting of Mohandirams, friends, and acquaintances specially invited. Speeches were made, healths drunk, toasts proposed; and while unbounded hilarity had free exercise within, ever and anon a loud hurrah from without gave notice of what was going on there. As soon as one company retired, another took their places, and speedily fresh courses made the laden tables groan again. After dark, fireworks illuminated the gardens, and to a late hour at night the Modliar was occupied in receiving the complimentary visits, and acknowledging the salams, of the throngs who poured into the place in an almost endless stream.

APPENDIX 3

A list of caste pamphlets and caste literature in chronological order, 1864–1930

This is not a comprehensive list, merely one that encompasses those works which have come within my knowledge. It should *not* be understood as evidence that all these publications have been consulted or analysed in the course of my research.

Most of the works were recorded from the H. C. P. Bell Collection at the Colombo Museum, but I have also made use of the bibliographies in Bryce Ryan (1953), Patrick Peebles (1973) and H. A. I. Goonetileke's *A Bibliography of Ceylon*, Zug: 1970 and 1976, and some titles supplied by Dr K. N. O. Dharmadasa. H. C. P. Bell has also inserted comments and identified those authors who used nom de plumes. These have been incorporated in the notes, while the author's real name is placed within square brackets.

Unless otherwise stated, all these publications are in Sinhalese. In one or two cases the title page has a title in both English and Sinhalese, in which case the English title has been adopted (without imposing a correct transliteration). Translations of the Sinhalese titles have been provided in notes printed at the end of the appendix. I am grateful to Dr K. N. O. Dharmadasa for his assistance in the translation of these titles and the transliteration of Sinhala words and names. It is likely that some errors have been made in the dates of publication attributed to some works.

1 [Anon]
1864 *Janawansaya nohot Mahāsammata patan Manushiyangē Kulabēdaya,*[1] Colombo: Lakrivikirana: 54 pp. verse.

2 Joseph Silva
1873 *Nītiya,*[2] Colombo: printed by author: 20 pp. verse.

3 Weligama Sri Sumangala Terunnansē
1876 *Itihāsa or A Collection of Useful Information concerning the Natives of Ceylon as recorded in Ancient Histories,* Colombo: published by Arnold Dias, Wesleyan Mission Press: 112 pp.

4 Don Arnolis [Hikkaduvē Sri Sumangala Terunnasē][3]
1877 *Kevaṭṭa Vamsaya or The True History of the Kareiyas and Paravas disproving the statements made in the Itihāsa,* Colombo: F. Cooray: 37 pp.

5 [Anon]
1877 *Susiri Wata,*[4] ??: privately printed.

6 John Fernando Veeravarnakurukulasuriya Appuhamy[5]
1879 *Itihasa Warnanāwa refuting the statements of the Kewaṭṭa Vansaya and corroborating the Sound Arguments of Itihāsaya,* Pitakotte: Catholic Press: 64 pp.

7 Le Mesurier, C. J. R. and Panabokke, T. B.
1880 *The Nīti-Nighaṇḍuva or the Vocabulary of Law – As it Existed in the Last Days of the Kandyan Kingdom,* Colombo: William Henry Herbert, Govt Printer: in English.

8 H. Soysa [G. D. Pälis Appuhamy][6]
1885 *Jātiwādamardanaya*,[7] Colombo Kavatakatika Press: 13 pp. verse.

9 D. B. M. [Manuel de Abrew][8]
1885 *Kula Bēdaya saha Elubalu Kalāva hevat Purāna sita Lōkayehi päväti Kula Pilivela Däkveemak saha 'Jātiwādamardanaya' yana namin prasiddakala potata uttaraya*,[9] Colombo: ?: 7 pp. verse.

10 F. A. Gavariyā [Sīduvē Gurunansē of Negombo][10]
1885 *Jātivāda mardanaya Prahāraya*,[11] Colombo: ?: 10 pp. verse.

11 D. C. Perera [G. D. Pälis Appuhamy][12]
1885 *Jātivada Mardana Varnanāva hevat Jātivāda Mardanayata uttara vashayen Prasiddakara tibena Elubalu potata saha prahārayatathuttara*,[13] Colombo: Kavatakatika Press: 10 pp. verse.

12 D. B. P. [Subhūti Unnānsē of Battaramulla & Sri Sumangala Terunnānsē][14]
1885 *Chathurvanīya Vibhāriniya nohot Kaṣta Durālāpa Prahāraya*,[15] Colombo: Sri Kalinga Press: 14 pp. verse.

13 Mātara Bali Äduru [Sedaran Arachchi of Bentota][16]
1885 *Jātiminipahana*,[17] ?: privately printed, 8 pp verse.

14 W. W. [W. Mendis Wickramasinghe of Kurana, Negombo]
1885 *A Review of the 'Nīti-Nighanduwa' and the Caste System in Ceylon*, Colombo: The Ceylon Catholic Messenger Press: 38 pp. in English.

15 Mahakavi Sri Wanigasekera [Subhūti Unnānsē of Battaramulla][18]
1885 *Itihāsamūlōchchēdiniya*,[19] Colombo: printed by author: 46 pp. prose and verse.

16 Gajasinha Vikramaratna [a pseudonym][20]
1885 *Jātivāda Vighātanaya nohot Kastadurālāpa Prahārayata Uttara*, ??: ?: 17 pp. verse.

17 M. A. Pieris and S. P. Dias [Tambi Appu Gurunnānsē of Galkissa and Weligama Sri Sumangala Unnānsē][21]
1885 *Sudra Nirṇaya*,[22] Colombo: Lakminipahana Press: 23 pp.

18 Agampodi Mendis[23]
1886 *Sudradarpa Mardanaya*[24], 14 pp. verse.

19 F. A. Gavariyā [Sīduvē Gurunnansē of Negombo][25]
1886 *Sudrapratāpa Sunhāraya Hevat Nīti-Nighanduwa-Jātivāda-Mardanaya saha Jātivāda Mardana Varnanāva Yanādi potvala sandahan karunu gäna Sankshipta Uttara*[26] ??:?: 10 pp. verse.

20 W. W. [W. Mendis Wickramasinghe]
1886 *A Few Thoughts on 'Chaturvarnaya', or the Four-fold Social System of Castes*, Colombo: Ceylon Catholic Orphan Press: 59 pp. in English.

21 Anon [P. De Abrew of Welitara][27]
n.d. *Sudravarnīya Prahāraya*,[28] ??:?: 13 pp. verse.

22 Chaturumukha Mahāsaraswati [Subhūti Unnansē of Battaramulla?][29]
n.d. *Kēvaṭṭa Durā Durayōga Khandanaya*,[30] Mutwal: Lakminipahana Press: 14 pp. verse.

23 Sri Kulasekera [compiler?]
n.d. *Sudrabandana Sankalikaya hevat Govin Bandinā Vilanguva*,[31] ??: privately printed: 48 pp. verse.

24 Sadris de Alwis
1886 *Sinhala Kulapuvata*,[32] Colombo: Lakwidwana Press.

25 J. W. P. [Perera]
1887 *Caste and Class: The Aristocracy of the Maritime Provinces of Ceylon*, Colombo: Industrial Press: 16 pp. in English.

26 W. D. S. Wikremasekera
[1888] *A Fair Statement of Facts or Caste Impartially Considered*, Colombo: Independent Press, (for?) A. M. Rupasinha: 16 pp. in English.
27 G. A. Dharmaratna[33]
1890 *The Kara-Goi Contest with an appeal to the House of Commons*, Colombo: The Independent Press: 91 pp. in English.
28 A. F. Kawrawasekhara
1904 *Sacchudra-Nāṭakaya nohoi Handuru Bätē*,[34] Kurunegala: Chandraloka Press: T. S. Pieris.
29 John de Silva
1904 *Kevul Paliya*,[35] Kurunegala: Chandraloka Press, M. S. Fernando.
30 Don Siman de Silva Nāmōpalaksita Srī Mahākavi Chakravarti
1904 *Kevul Sandēsaya*,[36] Kurunegala: M. S. Fernando.
31 J. O. M. Obeyesekera
1909 *The Origin of the Govivamsa*, Colombo: ?: in English.
32 A. E. Roberts[37]
1909a *Viswakarma and His Descendants*, Colombo: Ceylon Viswakarma Union: 80 pp. in English.
1909b 'The chilling influence of caste on the arts and sciences', *Aryan*, vol. 1, August 1909: in English.
1910a 'The bane of caste: a political peril', *Aryan*, vol. 2:4, April 1910, pp. 49–51: in English.
1910b 'Ceylon and her people: the application of the term Govi', *Aryan*, vol. 2:7, July 1910, pp. 97–102: in English.
33 Dandugama George Perera Warnaculasuriya Seneviratna
1912 *Ksatriya Wansaya*, Dehiwala: Oriental Press: 54 pp.
34 James Bastian Perera
1914 *Nīti Ratnavaliya*,[38] Dehiwala: Oriental Press.
35 H. F. and F. A. Fernando
1920 *A Dip into the Past or Matters of Historical Interest relating to the portion of The Singhalese known as KA-U-RUWA*, Colombo: Times of Ceylon Co. Ltd: 46 pp. in English.
36 Lionel de Fonseka
1921 'The Karave flag', *Ceylon Antiquary and Literary Register*, vol. III: pt 1, July 1921, pp. 1–11: in English.
37 *Mudaliyar* W. F. Gunawardhana
1922 *Ceylon Council Reform and Minorities: A Political Essay*,[39] Colombo: W. E. Bastian: 19 pp. in English.
38 D. F. Goonetilleke
1926 *Aitihāsika Luhuṅdu Saṭahan*, Moratuwa.
39 A. H. T. de S. [de Soysa]
1930 *Ancient Kaurava Flags: With Apologies to a certain 'Note' to rebut Ignorant Calumnies and in the Interests of Ceylon History*, Colombo: Ceylon Examiner Press: 8 pp. in English.

Note: Maitripala [M. D. A.] Wijesinghe's *A Case Against Caste* (Colombo: Apothecaries Co. Ltd, 1927 . . . 90 pp. in English) has not been listed above because it lived up to its title and criticised casteism. The author himself was Salāgama, but the book was financed by a member of the Pedris family (information from Mr James T. Rutnam).

Notes

1 Title: Janavansa or Caste Division among People since the Great Elect [sometimes, inaccurately, referred to as Great Agreement].
2 Title: Law.
3 H. C. P. Bell: 'Goyigama side; combats [item 3]'.
4 Title: Narrative of Virtue.
5 The author is described as 'a native of Beruwala' in G. A. Dharmaratna, 1890.
6 H. C. P. Bell: 'on the Goyigama side'. Bell adds that Pälis Appuhamy was the editor of the 'Kavatakatika' (which was a humorous journal inaugurated in 1872).
7 Title: Subduing Caste Controversies.
8 Bell: 'Chāliya view: replying to [item 8]'.
9 Title: Caste Division and the *Elubalu* Story or An Elucidation of the Caste System that has continued from Ancient Times and a Reply to the Book published under the name *Jātivāda Mardanaya*.
10 Bell: 'Durāva view, reply to [item 8]'.
11 Title: A blow to *Jātivāda Mardanaya*.
12 Bell: 'Goyigama side, reply to [item 10]; enlarges on [item 8]'.
13 Title: Explication of *Jātivāda Mardanaya* or Replies to the *Prahāraya* and *Elubalu* books published in answer to the *Jātivāda Marda Mardanaya*.
14 Bell: 'Goyigama side, replies to [items 9 and 10]'.
15 Title: Explanation of the Four Varnas or A Blow to *Kaṣta Durā* Utterances. This title incorporates a Spoonerism: 'Kaṣta Durā' = 'Dusta Karā', hence 'Vile Durā and Wicked Karā' (explanation provided by K. N. O. Dharmadasa).
16 Bell: 'Beravā view, nominally Goyigama really against Chāliya caste'.
17 Title: An Illumination of Caste (literal translation).
18 Bell: 'Goyigama side, combats [items 4 and 6]'.
19 Title: Annihilation of the Itihāsa.
20 Bell: 'nom de plume, Durāva viewpoint, attacks Goyigama side'.
21 Bell: 'Karāva view', combats [item 7].
22 Title: Ascertaining the *Sudras*.
23 Bell: 'nom de plume of a Karāva or Durāva author; nominally neutral, but supports Karāva and Durāva against Goyigama caste and [item 12]'.
24 Title: Crushing the Arrogance of the Sudras.
25 Bell: 'Durāva view; combats [item 7]'.
26 Title: The Annihilation of the Majesty of the Sudras or Succinct Answers to the points made in the *Nīti Nighanduva*, *Jātivāda Mardanaya*, and *Jātivāda Mardana Varnanava*, etc.
27 Bell: 'Chāliya view; attacks Goyigama side'.
28 Title: Blow to the Śudravarna.
29 Bell gives the nom de plume of the anonymous author with the following proviso: 'on general hearsay, though not proved'. And adds: 'Goyigama side, combats filthily [items 10, 16, 18 and 21]'.
30 Title: Breaking Down the Versified Fabrics of the Fishers and Toddy drawers.
31 Title: Fetters to bind the Sudras (i.e. the Goyi).
32 Title: The Story of the Sinhalese Castes.
33 In the preface there is a reference to 'those Karava and Karaiar gentlemen, who from all parts of the Island urged us to prepare this pamphlet', and an acknowledgement of 'the valuable information received from many sacerdotal and lay friends',

especially that of *Muhandiram* Johanis Mendis and Henry Dharmaratna. Both Dharmaratna brothers were lawyers.

34 Title: Whiplash for the Hañduru.

35 Title: The Revenge of the Fishermen.

36 Title: The Message of the Fishermen.

37 Dr A. Emmanuel Ratnaweera Roberts (1864–1934) was one of the few medical men in his time who attempted to combine *ayurvēda* with Western medicine. His writings represent a Navandanna viewpoint. For bio-data, see Roberts, 1974a, pp. 559–60.

38 Title: The Garland of the Gems of Law. This booklet provides a Durāva viewpoint and has been reprinted in more recent times.

39 A Karāva view.

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